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DOCTOR THORNE

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME II.

"*What I can do, that I will do.*" — Page 25.

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DOCTOR THORNE

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME II.

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DOCTOR THORNE.

CHAPTER I.

LOUIS SCATCHERD.

When Dr. Thorne reached Boxall Hill he found Mr. Rerechild from Barchester there before him. Poor Lady Scatcherd, when her husband was stricken by the fit, hardly knew in her dismay what adequate steps to take. She had, as a matter of course, sent for Dr. Thorne; but she had thought that in so grave a peril the medical skill of no one man could suffice. It was, she knew, quite out of the question for her to invoke the aid of Dr. Fillgrave, whom no earthly persuasion would have brought to Boxall Hill; and as Mr. Rerechild was supposed in the Barchester world to be second,—though at a long interval,—to that great man, she had applied for his assistance.

Now Mr. Rerechild was a follower and humble friend of Dr. Fillgrave; and was wont to regard anything that came from the Barchester doctor as sure light from the lamp of Æsculapius. He could not, therefore, be other than an enemy of Dr. Thorne.

But he was a prudent, discreet man, with a long family, averse to professional hostilities, as knowing that he could make more by medical friends than medical foes, and not at all inclined to take up any man's cudgel to his own detriment. He had, of course, heard of that dreadful affront which had been put upon his friend, as had all the "medical world,"—all the medical world at least of Barsetshire; and he had often expressed his sympathy with Dr. Fillgrave and his abhorrence of Dr. Thorne's anti-professional practices. But now that he found himself about to be brought in contact with Dr. Thorne, he reflected that the Galen of Greshamsbury was at any rate equal in reputation to him of Barchester; that the one was probably on the rise, whereas the other was already considered by some as rather antiquated; and he therefore wisely resolved that the present would be an excellent opportunity for him to make a friend of Dr. Thorne.

Poor Lady Scatcherd had an inkling that Dr. Fillgrave and Mr. Rerechild were accustomed to row in the same boat, and she was not altogether free from fear that there might be an outbreak. She therefore took an opportunity before Dr. Thorne's arrival to deprecate any wrathful tendency.

"Oh, Lady Scatcherd! I have the greatest respect for Dr. Thorne," said he; "the greatest possible respect; a most skilful practitioner,—something brusque certainly, and perhaps a little obstinate. But what then? we have all our faults, Lady Scatcherd."

"Oh—yes; we all have, Mr. Rerechild; that 's certain."

"There 's my friend Fillgrave,—Lady Scatcherd.

He cannot bear anything of that sort. Now I think he 's wrong; and so I tell him." Mr. Rerechild was in error here; for he had never yet ventured to tell Dr. Fillgrave that he was wrong in anything. "We must bear and forbear, you know. Dr. Thorne is an excellent man;—in his way very excellent, Lady Scatcherd."

This little conversation took place after Mr. Rerechild's first visit to his patient. What steps were immediately taken for the relief of the sufferer we need not describe. They were doubtless well intended, and were, perhaps, as well adapted to stave off the coming evil day as any that Dr. Fillgrave, or even the great Sir Omicron Pie might have used.

And then Dr. Thorne arrived.

"Oh, doctor! doctor!" exclaimed Lady Scatcherd, almost hanging round his neck in the hall. "What are we to do? What are we to do? He 's very bad."

"Has he spoken?"

"No; nothing like a word. He has made one or two muttered sounds; but, poor soul, you could make nothing of it. Oh, doctor! doctor! he has never been like this before."

It was easy to see where Lady Scatcherd placed any such faith as she might still have in the healing art. "Mr. Rerechild is here and has seen him," she continued. "I thought it best to send for two, for fear of accidents. He has done something;—I don't know what. But, doctor, do tell me the truth now; I look to you to tell me the truth."

Dr. Thorne then went up and saw his patient; and had he literally complied with Lady Scatcherd's re-

quest he might have told her at once that there was no hope. As, however, he had not the heart to do this, he mystified the case as doctors so well know how to do, and told her that "there was cause to fear, great cause for fear; he was sorry to say, very great cause for much fear."

Dr. Thorne promised to stay that night there, and, if possible, the following night also; and then Lady Scatcherd became troubled in her mind as to what she should do with Mr. Rerechild. He also declared, with much medical humanity, that, let the inconvenience be what it might, he too would stay the night. "The loss," he said, "of such a man as Sir Roger Scatcherd was of such paramount importance as to make other matters trivial. He would certainly not allow the whole weight to fall on the shoulders of his friend Dr. Thorne. He also would stay at any rate that night by the sick man's bedside. By the following morning some change might be expected."

"I say, Dr. Thorne," said her ladyship, calling the doctor into the housekeeping-room, in which she and Hannah spent any time that they were not required upstairs; "just come in, doctor. You could n't tell him we don't want him any more, could you?"

"Tell whom?" said the doctor.

"Why,—Mr. Rerechild; might n't he go away, do you think?"

Dr. Thorne explained that Mr. Rerechild certainly might go away if he pleased; but that it would by no means be proper for one doctor to tell another to leave the house. And so Mr. Rerechild was allowed to share the glories of the night.

In the meantime the patient remained speechless;

but it soon became evident that Nature was using all her efforts to make one final rally. From time to time he moaned and muttered as though he was conscious, and it seemed as though he strove to speak. He gradually became awake, at any rate to suffering, and Dr. Thorne began to think that the last scene would be postponed for yet a while longer.

"Wonderful strong constitution,—eh, Dr. Thorne? wonderful!" said Mr. Rerechild.

"Yes; he has been a strong man."

"Strong as a horse, Dr. Thorne. Lord, what that man would have been if he had given himself a chance! You know his constitution of course."

"Yes; pretty well. I 've attended him for many years."

"Always drinking, I suppose; always at it;—eh?"

"He has not been a temperate man, certainly."

"The brain, you see, clean gone;—and not a particle of coating left to the stomach; and yet what a struggle he makes;—interesting case, is n't it?"

"It 's very sad to see such an intellect so destroyed."

"Very sad, very sad indeed. How Fillgrave would have liked to have seen this case. He is a clever man, is Fillgrave,—in his way, you know."

"I am sure he is," said Dr. Thorne.

"Not that he 'd make anything of a case like this now,—he 's not, you know, quite,—quite;—perhaps not quite up to the new time of day, if one may say so."

"He has had a very extensive provincial practice," said Dr. Thorne.

"Oh, very,—very; and made a tidy lot of money, too, Dr. Fillgrave. He 's worth six thousand pounds,

I suppose. Now that 's a good deal of money to put by in a little town like Barchester."

"Yes, indeed."

"What I say to Fillgrave is this;—keep your eyes open; one should never be too old to learn;—there 's always something new worth picking up. But no;—he won't believe that. He can't believe that any new ideas can be worth anything. You know a man must go to the wall in that way;—eh, doctor?"

And then again they were called to their patient. "He 's doing finely, finely," said Mr. Rerechild to Lady Scatcherd. "There 's fair ground to hope he 'll rally; fair ground, is there not, doctor?"

"Yes, he 'll rally; but how long that may last, that we can hardly say."

"Oh, no, certainly not, certainly not;—that is, not with any certainty; but still he 's doing finely, Lady Scatcherd, considering everything!"

"How long will you give him, doctor?" said Mr. Rerechild to his new friend when they were again alone. "Ten days? I say ten days, or from that to a fortnight; not more; but I think he 'll struggle on ten days."

"Perhaps so," said the doctor. "I should not like to say exactly to a day."

"No, certainly not. We cannot say exactly to a day; but I say ten days; as for anything like a recovery, that, you know——"

"Is out of the question," said Dr. Thorne, gravely.

"Quite so, quite so; coating of the stomach clean gone, you know; brain destroyed: did you observe the periporollida? I never saw them so swelled before; now when the periporollida are swollen like that——"

"Yes, very much; it 's always the case when paralysis has been brought about by intemperance."

"Always, always; I have remarked that always; the periporollida in such cases are always extended; most interesting case, is n't it? I do wish Fillgrave could have seen it. But, I believe you and Fillgrave don't quite—eh?"

"No, not quite," said Dr. Thorne; who, as he thought of his last interview with Dr. Fillgrave, and of that gentleman's exceeding anger as he stood in the hall below, could not keep himself from smiling, sad as the occasion was.

Nothing would induce Lady Scatcherd to go to bed; but the two doctors agreed to lie down, each in a room on one side of the patient. How was it possible that anything but good should come to him, being so guarded? "He is going on finely, Lady Scatcherd, quite finely," were the last words Mr. Rerechild said as he left the room. And then Dr. Thorne, taking Lady Scatcherd's hand and leading her out into another chamber, told her the truth.

"Lady Scatcherd," said he, in his tenderest voice, —and his voice could be very tender when occasion required it,—"Lady Scatcherd, do not hope; you must not hope; it would be cruel to bid you do so."

"Oh, doctor! oh, doctor!"

"My dear friend, there is no hope."

"Oh, Dr. Thorne!" said the wife, looking wildly up into her companion's face, though she hardly yet realised the meaning of what he said, although her senses were half stunned by the blow.

"Dear Lady Scatcherd, is it not better that I should tell you the truth?"

"Oh, I suppose so; oh, yes; oh, yes; ah me! ah me! ah me!" And then she began rocking herself backwards and forwards on her chair, with her apron up to her eyes. "What shall I do? what shall I do?"

"Look to Him, Lady Scatcherd, who only can make such grief endurable."

"Yes, yes, yes; I suppose so. Ah me! ah me! But, Dr. Thorne, there must be some chance;—is n't there any chance? That man says that he 's going on so well."

"I fear there is no chance. As far as my knowledge goes there is no chance."

"Then why does that chattering magpie tell such lies to a woman? Ah me! ah me! ah me! oh, doctor! doctor! what shall I do? what shall I do?" and poor Lady Scatcherd, fairly overcome by her sorrow, burst out crying like a great school-girl.

And yet what had her husband done for her that she should thus weep for him? Would not her life be much more blessed when this cause of all her troubles should be removed from her? Would she not then be a free woman instead of a slave? Might she not then expect to begin to taste the comforts of life? What had that harsh tyrant of hers done that was good or serviceable for her? Why should she thus weep for him in paroxysms of truest grief?

We hear a good deal of jolly widows; and the slanderous raillery of the world tells much of conjugal disturbances as a cure for which women will look forward to a state of widowhood with not unwilling eyes. The raillery of the world is very slanderous. In our daily jests we attribute to each other vices of which neither we, nor our neighbours, nor our friends, nor

even our enemies, are ever guilty. It is our favourite parlance to talk of the family troubles of Mrs. Green on our right, and to tell how Mrs. Young on our left is strongly suspected of having raised her hand to her lord and master. What right have we to make these charges? What have we seen in our own personal walks through life to make us believe that women are devils? There may possibly have been a Xantippe here and there, but Imogenes are to be found under every bush. Lady Scatcherd, in spite of the life she had led, was one of them.

"You should send a message up to London for Louis," said the doctor.

"We did that, doctor; we did that to-day;—we sent up a telegraph. Oh, me! oh, me! poor boy, what will he do? I shall never know what to do with him, never! never!" And with such sorrowful wailings she sat rocking herself through the long night, every now and then comforting herself by the performance of some menial service in the sick man's room.

Sir Roger passed the night much as he had passed the day, except that he appeared gradually to be growing nearer to a state of consciousness. On the following morning they succeeded at last in making Mr. Rerechild understand that they were not desirous of keeping him longer from his Barchester practice; and at about twelve o'clock Dr. Thorne also went, promising that he would return in the evening, and again pass the night at Boxall Hill.

In the course of the afternoon Sir Roger once more awoke to his senses, and when he did so his son was standing at his bedside. Louis Philippe Scatcherd,—or as it may be more convenient to call him, Louis,—

was a young man just of the age of Frank Gresham. But there could hardly be two youths more different in their appearance. Louis, though his father and mother were both robust persons, was short and slight, and now of a sickly frame. Frank was a picture of health and strength; but though manly in disposition, was by no means precocious either in appearance or manners. Louis Scatcherd looked as though he was four years the other's senior. He had been sent to Eton when he was fifteen, his father being under the impression that this was the most ready and best-recognised method of making him a gentleman. Here he did not altogether fail as regarded the coveted object of his becoming the companion of gentlemen. He had more pocket-money than any other lad in the school, and was possessed also of a certain effrontery which carried him ahead among boys of his own age. He gained, therefore, a degree of éclat, even among those who knew, and very frequently said to each other, that young Scatcherd was not fit to be their companion except on such open occasions as those of cricket-matches and boat-races. Boys, in this respect, are at least as exclusive as men, and understand as well the difference between an inner and an outer circle. Scatcherd had many companions at school who were glad enough to go up to Maidenhead with him in his boat; but there was not one among them who would have talked to him of his sister.

Sir Roger was vastly proud of his son's success, and did his best to stimulate it by lavish expenditure at The Christopher, whenever he could manage to run down to Eton. But this practice, though sufficiently unexceptionable to the boys, was not held in equal de-

light by the masters. To tell the truth, neither Sir Roger nor his son were favourites with these stern custodians. At last it was felt necessary to get rid of them both; and Louis was not long in giving them an opportunity, by getting tipsy twice in one week. On the second occasion he was sent away, and he and Sir Roger, though long talked of, were seen no more at Eton.

But the universities were still open to Louis Philippe, and before he was eighteen he was entered as a gentleman-commoner at Trinity. As he was, moreover, the eldest son of a baronet, and had almost unlimited command of money, here also he was enabled for a while to shine.

To shine! but very fitfully; and one may say almost with a ghastly glare. The very lads who had eaten his father's dinners at Eton, and shared his four-oar at Eton, knew much better than to associate with him at Cambridge now that they had put on the toga virilis. They were still as prone as ever to fun, frolic, and devilry,—perhaps more so even than ever, seeing that more was in their power; but they acquired an idea that it behoved them to be somewhat circumspect as to the men with whom their pranks were perpetrated. So, in those days, Louis Scatcherd was coldly looked on by his whilom Eton friends.

But young Scatcherd did not fail to find companions at Cambridge also. There are few places indeed in which a rich man cannot buy companionship. But the set with whom he lived at Cambridge were the worst of the place. They were fast, slang men, who were fast and slang, and nothing else,—men who imitated grooms in more than their dress, and who looked

on the customary heroes of race-courses as the highest lords of the ascendent upon earth. Among those at college young Scatcherd did shine as long as such lustre was permitted him. Here, indeed, his father, who had striven only to encourage him at Eton, did strive somewhat to control him. But that was not now easy. If he limited his son's allowance, he only drove him to do his debauchery on credit. There were plenty to lend money to the son of the great millionaire; and so, after eighteen months' trial of a university education, Sir Roger had no alternative but to withdraw his son from his alma mater.

What was he then to do with him? Unluckily it was considered quite unnecessary to take any steps towards enabling him to earn his bread. Now nothing on earth can be more difficult than bringing up well a young man who has not to earn his own bread, and who has no recognised station among other young men similarly circumstanced. Juvenile dukes, and sprouting earls, find their duties and their places as easily as embryo clergymen and sucking barristers. Provision is made for their peculiar positions: and, though they may possibly go astray, they have a fair chance given to them of running within the posts. The same may be said of such youths as Frank Gresham. There are enough of them in the community to have made it necessary that their well-being should be a matter of care and fore-thought. But there are but few men turned out in the world in the position of Louis Scatcherd; and, of those few, but very few enter the real battle of life under good auspices.

Poor Sir Roger, though he had hardly time with all his multitudinous railways to look into this thoroughly,

had a glimmering of it. When he saw his son's pale face, and paid his wine bills, and heard of his doings in horse-flesh, he did know that things were not going well; he did understand that the heir to a baronetcy and a fortune of some ten thousand a year might be doing better. But what was he to do? He could not watch over his boy himself; so he took a tutor for him and sent him abroad.

Louis and the tutor got as far as Berlin, with what mutual satisfaction to each other need not be specially described. But from Berlin Sir Roger received a letter in which the tutor declined to go on any further in the task which he had undertaken. He found that he had no influence over his pupil, and he could not reconcile it to his conscience to be the spectator of such a life as that which Mr. Scatcherd led. He had no power in inducing Mr. Scatcherd to leave Berlin; but he would remain there himself till he should hear from Sir Roger. So Sir Roger had to leave the huge government works which he was then erecting on the southern coast, and hurry off to Berlin to see what could be done with young Hopeful.

The young Hopeful was by no means a fool; and in some matters was more than a match for his father. Sir Roger, in his anger, threatened to cast him off without a shilling. Louis, with mixed penitence and effrontery, reminded him that he could not change the descent of the title; promised amendment; declared that he had done only as do other young men of fortune; and hinted that the tutor was a strait-laced ass. The father and the son returned together to Boxall Hill, and three months afterwards Mr. Scatcherd set up for himself in London.

And now his life, if not more virtuous, was more crafty than it had been. He had no tutor to watch his doings and complain of them, and he had sufficient sense to keep himself from absolute pecuniary ruin. He lived, it is true, where sharpers and blacklegs had too often opportunities of plucking him; but, young as he was, he had been sufficiently long about the world to take care he was not openly robbed; and as he was not openly robbed, his father, in a certain sense, was proud of him.

Tidings however came,—came at least in those last days,—which cut Sir Roger to the quick; tidings of vice in his son which the father could not but attribute to his own example. Twice the mother was called up to the sick-bed of her only child, while he lay raving in that horrid madness by which the outraged mind avenges itself on the body! Twice he was found raging in delirium tremens, and twice the father was told that a continuance of such life must end in an early death.

It may easily be conceived that Sir Roger was not a happy man. Lying there with that brandy bottle beneath his pillow, reflecting in his moments of rest that that son of his had his brandy bottle also beneath his pillow, he could hardly have been happy. But he was not a man to say much about his misery. Though he could restrain neither himself nor his heir, he could endure in silence; and in silence he did endure, till, opening his eyes to the consciousness of death, he at last spoke a few words to the only friend he knew.

Louis Scatcherd was not a fool, nor was he naturally, perhaps, of a depraved disposition; but he had to reap the fruits of the worst education which England was

able to give him. There were moments in his life when he felt that a better, a higher, nay, a much happier career was open to him than that which he had prepared himself to lead. Now and then he would reflect what money and rank might have done for him; he would look with wistful eyes to the proud doings of others of his age; would dream of quiet joys, of a sweet wife, of a house to which might be asked friends who were neither jockeys nor drunkards; he would dream of such things in his short intervals of constrained sobriety; but the dream would only serve to make him moody.

This was the best side of his character; the worst, probably, was that which was brought into play by the fact that he was not a fool. He would have had a better chance of redemption in this world,—perhaps also in another,—had he been a fool. As it was, he was no fool. He was not to be done, not he; he knew, no one better, the value of a shilling; he knew, also, how to keep his shillings, and how to spend them. He consorted much with blacklegs and such-like, because blacklegs were to his taste. He boasted daily, nay, hourly to himself, and frequently to those around him, that the leeches who were stuck round him could draw but little blood from him. He could spend his money freely; but he would so spend it that he himself might reap the gratification of the expenditure. He was acute, crafty, knowing, and up to every damnable dodge practised by men of the class with whom he lived. At one-and-twenty he was that most odious of all odious characters,—a close-fisted reprobate.

He was a small man, not ill-made by Nature, but reduced to unnatural tenuity by dissipation,—a corporeal attribute of which he was apt to boast, as it enabled

him, as he said, to put himself up at 7 st. 7 lb. without any "d—— nonsense of not eating and drinking." The power, however, was one of which he did not often avail himself, as his nerves were seldom in a fit state for riding. His hair was dark red, and he wore red moustaches, and a great deal of red beard beneath his chin, cut in a manner to make him look like an American. His voice also had a Yankee twang, being a cross between that of an American trader and an English groom; and his eyes were keen and fixed, and cold and knowing.

Such was the son whom Sir Roger saw standing at his bedside when first he awoke to consciousness. It must not be supposed that Sir Roger looked at him with our eyes. To him he was an only child, the heir of his wealth, the future bearer of his title; the most heart-stirring remembrancer of those other days, when he had been so much a poorer, and so much a happier man. Let that boy be bad or good, he was all Sir Roger had; and the father was still able to hope, when others thought that all ground for hope was gone.

The mother also loved her son with a mother's natural love; but Louis had ever been ashamed of his mother, and had, as far as possible, estranged himself from her. Her heart, perhaps, fixed itself with almost a warmer love on Frank Gresham, her foster-son. Frank she saw but seldom, but when she did see him he never refused her embrace. There was, too, a joyous, genial lustre about Frank's face which always endeared him to women, and made his former nurse regard him as the pet creation of the age. Though she but seldom interfered with any monetary arrangement of her husband's, yet once or twice she had ventured

to hint that a legacy left to the young squire would make her a happy woman. Sir Roger, however, on these occasions had not appeared very desirous of making his wife happy.

"Ah, Louis! is that you?" ejaculated Sir Roger, in tones hardly more than half-formed. Afterwards, in a day or two, that is, he fully recovered his voice; but just then he could hardly open his jaws, and spoke almost through his teeth. He managed, however, to put out his hand, and lay it on the counterpane, so that his son could take it. "Why, that 's well, governor," said the son; "you 'll be as right as a trivet in a day or two;—eh, governor?"

The "governor" smiled with a ghastly smile. He already pretty well knew that he would never again be "right," as his son called it, on that side the grave. It did not, moreover, suit him to say much just at that moment, so he contented himself with holding his son's hand. He lay still in this position for a moment, and then, turning round painfully on his side, endeavoured to put his hand to the place where his dire enemy usually was concealed. Sir Roger, however, was too weak now to be his own master. He was at length, though too late, a captive in the hands of nurses and doctors, and the bottle had now been removed.

Then Lady Scatcherd came in, and seeing that her husband was no longer unconscious, she could not but believe that Dr. Thorne had been wrong;—she could not but think that there must be some ground for hope. She threw herself on her knees at the bedside, bursting into tears as she did so, and taking Sir Roger's hand in hers covered it with kisses.

"Bother!" said Sir Roger.

She did not, however, long occupy herself with the indulgence of her feelings; but going speedily to work, produced such sustenance as the doctors had ordered to be given when the patient might awake. A breakfast-cup was brought to him, and a few drops were put into his mouth; but he soon made it manifest that he would take nothing more of a description so perfectly innocent.

"A drop of brandy,—just a little drop," said he, half-ordering, and half-entreating.

"Ah, Roger!" said Lady Scatcherd.

"Just a little drop, Louis," said the sick man, appealing to his son.

"A little will be good for him; bring the bottle, mother," said the son.

After some altercation the brandy bottle was brought, and Louis, with what he thought a very sparing hand, proceeded to pour about half a wine-glassful into the cup. As he did so, Sir Roger, weak as he was, contrived to shake his son's arm, so as greatly to increase the dose.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the sick man, and then greedily swallowed the dose.

CHAPTER II.

SIR ROGER DIES.

That night the doctor stayed at Boxall Hill, and the next night;—so that it became a customary thing for him to sleep there during the latter part of Sir Roger's illness. He returned home daily to Greshamsbury; for he had his patients there, to whom he was as necessary as to Sir Roger,—the foremost of whom was Lady Arabella. He had, therefore, no slight work on his hands, seeing that his nights were by no means wholly devoted to rest.

Mr. Rerechild had not been much wrong as to the remaining space of life which he had allotted to the dying man. Once or twice Dr. Thorne had thought that the great original strength of his patient would have enabled him to fight against death for a somewhat longer period; but Sir Roger would give himself no chance. Whenever he was strong enough to have a will of his own, he insisted on having his very medicine mixed with brandy; and in the hours of the doctor's absence he was too often successful in his attempts.

"It does not much matter," Dr. Thorne had said to Lady Scatcherd. "Do what you can to keep down the quantity, but do not irritate him by refusing to obey. It does not much signify now." So Lady Scatcherd still administered the alcohol, and he from

day to day invented little schemes for increasing the amount, over which he chuckled with ghastly laughter.

Two or three times during these days Sir Roger essayed to speak seriously to his son; but Louis always frustrated him. He either got out of the room on some excuse, or made his mother interfere, on the score that so much talking would be bad for his father. He already knew with tolerable accuracy what was the purport of his father's will, and by no means approved of it; but as he could not now hope to induce his father to alter it so as to make it more favourable to himself, he conceived that no conversation on matters of business could be of use to him.

"Louis," said Sir Roger, one afternoon to his son; "Louis, I have not done by you as I ought to have done. I know that now."

"Nonsense, governor; never mind about that now. I shall do well enough, I dare say. Besides, it is n't too late. You can make it twenty-three years instead of twenty-five, if you like it."

"I do not mean as to money, Louis. There are things besides money which a father ought to look to."

"Now, father, don't fret yourself. I 'm all right; you may be sure of that."

"Louis, it 's that accursed brandy;—it 's that that I 'm afraid of. You see me here, my boy, how I 'm lying here now."

"Don't you be annoying yourself, governor; I 'm all right—quite right; and as for you, why, you 'll be up and about yourself in another month or so."

"I shall never be off this bed, my boy, till I 'm carried into my coffin on those chairs there. But I 'm not thinking of myself, Louis, but you. Think what

you may have before you if you can't avoid that accursed bottle."

"I 'm all right, governor; right as a trivet. It 's very little I take, except at an odd time or so."

"Oh, Louis! Louis!"

"Come, father, cheer up; this sort of thing is n't the thing for you at all. I wonder where mother is. She ought to be here with the broth; just let me go, and I 'll seek for her."

The father understood it all. He saw that it was now much beyond his faded powers to touch the heart or conscience of such a youth as his son had become. What now could he do for his boy except die? What else, what other benefit did his son require of him but to die;—to die so that his means of dissipation might be unbounded? He let go the unresisting hand which he held, and, as the young man crept out of the room, he turned his face to the wall. He turned his face to the wall and held bitter commune with his own heart. To what had he brought himself? To what had he brought his son? Oh, how happy would it have been for him could he have remained all his days a working stonemason in Barchester! How happy could he have died as such, years ago! Such tears as those which wet that pillow are the bitterest which human eyes can shed.

But while they were dropping the memoir of his life was in quick course of preparation. It was, indeed, nearly completed, with considerable detail. He had lingered on four days longer than might have been expected, and the author had thus had more than usual time for the work. In these days a man is nobody unless his biography is kept so far posted up that it

may be ready for the national breakfast-table on the morning after his demise. When it chances that the dead hero is one who was taken in his prime of life, of whose departure from among us the most far-seeing, biographical scribe can have no prophetic inkling, this must be difficult. Of great men, full of years, who are ripe for the sickle, who in the course of Nature must soon fall, it is of course comparatively easy for an active compiler to have his complete memoir ready in his desk. But in order that the idea of omnipresent and omniscient information may be kept up the young must be chronicled as quickly as the old. In some cases this task must, one would say, be difficult. Nevertheless, it is done.

The memoir of Sir Roger Scatcherd was progressing favourably. In this it was told how fortunate had been his life; how in his case, industry and genius combined had triumphed over the difficulties which humble birth and deficient education had thrown in his way; how he had made a name among England's great men; how the Queen had delighted to honour him, and nobles had been proud to have him for a guest at their mansions. Then followed a list of all the great works which he had achieved, of the railroads, canals, docks, harbours, gaols, and hospitals which he had constructed. His name was held up as an example to the labouring classes of his countrymen, and he was pointed at as one who had lived and died happy;—ever happy, said the biographer, because ever industrious. And so a great moral lesson was inculcated. A short paragraph was devoted to his appearance in Parliament; and unfortunate Mr. Romer was again held up to disgrace, for the thirtieth time, as having

been the means of depriving our legislative councils of the great assistance of Sir Roger's experience.

"Sir Roger," said the biographer in his concluding passage, "was possessed of an iron frame; but even iron will yield to the repeated blows of the hammer. In the latter years of his life he was known to overtask himself; and at length the body gave way, though the mind remained firm to the last. The subject of this memoir was only fifty-nine when he was taken from us."

And thus Sir Roger's life was written while the tears were yet falling on his pillow at Boxall Hill. It was a pity that a proof-sheet could not have been sent to him. No man was vainer of his reputation, and it would have greatly gratified him to know that posterity was about to speak of him in such terms,—to speak of him with a voice that would be audible for twenty-four hours.

Sir Roger made no further attempt to give counsel to his son. It was too evidently useless. The old dying lion felt that the lion's power had already passed from him, and that he was helpless in the hands of the young cub who was so soon to inherit the wealth of the forest. But Dr. Thorne was more kind to him. He had something yet to say as to his worldly hopes and worldly cares; and his old friend did not turn a deaf ear to him.

It was during the night that Sir Roger was most anxious to talk, and most capable of talking. He would lie through the day in a state half-comatose; but towards evening he would rouse himself, and by midnight he would be full of fitful energy. One night, as he lay wakeful and full of thought, he thus poured forth his whole heart to Dr. Thorne.

"Thorne," said he, "I told you all about my will, you know."

"Yes," said the other; "and I have blamed myself greatly that I have not again urged you to alter it. Your illness came too suddenly, Scatcherd; and then I was averse to speak of it."

"Why should I alter it? It is a good will;—as good as I can make. Not but that I have altered it since I spoke to you. I did it that day after you left me."

"Have you definitely named your heir in default of Louis?"

"No;—that is, yes. I had done that before. I have said Mary's eldest child, I have not altered that."

"But, Scatcherd, you must alter it."

"Must! well, then, I won't; but I 'll tell you what I have done, I have added a postscript,—a codicil they call it—saying that you and you only, know who is her eldest child. Winterbones and Jack Martin have witnessed that."

Dr. Thorne was going on to explain how very injudicious such an arrangement appeared to be; but Sir Roger would not listen to him. It was not about that that he wished to speak to him. To him it was matter of but minor interest who might inherit his money if his son should die early. His care was solely for his son's welfare. At twenty-five the heir might make his own will,—might bequeath all this wealth according to his own fancy. Sir Roger would not bring himself to believe that his son could follow him to the grave in so short a time.

"Never mind that, doctor, now; but about Louis; you will be his guardian, you know."

"Not his guardian. He is more than of age."

"Ah! but, doctor, you will be his guardian. The property will not be his till he be twenty-five. You will not desert him?"

"I will not desert him; but I doubt whether I can do much for him. What can I do, Scatcherd?"

"Use the power that a strong man has over a weak one. Use the power that my will will give you. Do for him as you would for a son of your own if you saw him going in bad courses. Do as a friend should do for a friend that is dead and gone. I would do so for you, doctor, if our places were changed."

"What I can do, that I will do," said Thorne, solemnly, taking as he spoke the contractor's hand in his own with a tight grasp.

"I know you will; I know you will. Oh, doctor! may you never feel as I do now! May you on your death-bed have no dread as I have, as to the fate of those you will leave behind you!"

Dr. Thorne felt that he could not say much in answer to this. The future fate of Louis Scatcherd was, he could not but own to himself, greatly to be dreaded. What good, what happiness, could be presaged for such a one as he was? What comfort could he offer to the father? And then he was called on to compare, as it were, the prospects of this unfortunate with those of his own darling; to contrast all that was murky, foul, and disheartening, with all that was perfect,—for to him she was all but perfect; to liken Louis Scatcherd to the angel who brightened his own hearthstone. How could he answer such an appeal?

He said nothing; but merely tightened his grasp of

the other's hand, to signify that he would do, as best he could, all that was asked of him. Sir Roger looked up sadly into the doctor's face, as though expecting some word of consolation. There was no comfort, no consolation to come to him!

"For three or four years he must greatly depend upon you," continued Sir Roger.

"I will do what I can," said the doctor. "What I can do I will do. But he is not a child, Scatcherd. At his age he must stand or fall mainly by his own conduct. The best thing for him will be to marry."

"Exactly; that 's just it, Thorne. I was coming to that. If he would marry, I think he would do well yet, for all that has come and gone. If he married, of course you would let him have the command of his own income."

"I will be governed entirely by your wishes. Under any circumstances his income will, as I understand, be quite sufficient for him, married or single."

"Ah!—but, Thorne, I should like to think he should shine with the best of them. For what have I made the money if not for that? Now if he marries,—decently that is,—some woman you know that can assist him in the world, let him have what he wants. It is not to save the money that I put it into your hands."

"No, Scatcherd; not to save the money, but to save him. I think that while you are yet with him you should advise him to marry."

"He does not care a straw for what I advise; not one straw. Why should he? How can I tell him to be sober when I have been a beast all my life myself? How can I advise him? That 's where it is! It is

that that now kills me. Advise! Why, when I speak to him he treats me like a child."

"He fears that you are too weak, you know; he thinks that you should not be allowed to talk."

"Nonsense! he knows better; you know better. Too weak! what signifies? Would I not give all that I have of strength at one blow if I could open his eyes to see as I see but for one minute?" And the sick man raised himself up in his bed as though he were actually going to expend all that remained to him of vigour in the energy of a moment.

"Gently, Scatcherd; gently. He will listen to you yet; but do not be so unruly."

"Thorne, you see that bottle there? Give me half a glass of brandy." The doctor turned round in his chair; but he hesitated in doing as he was desired. "Do as I ask you, doctor. It can do no harm now. You know that well enough. Why torture me now?"

"No, I will not torture you; but you will have water with it?"

"Water! No; the brandy by itself. I tell you I cannot speak without it. What 's the use of canting now? You know it can make no difference." Sir Roger was right. It could make no difference; and Dr. Thorne gave him the half-glass of brandy. "Ah, well; you 've a stingy hand, doctor; confounded stingy! You don't measure your medicines out in such light doses."

"You will be wanting more before morning, you know."

"Before morning! indeed I shall; a pint or so before that. I remember the time, doctor, when I have drunk to my own cheek above two quarts between

dinner and breakfast! ay, and worked all the day after it!"

"You have been a wonderful man, Scatcherd; very wonderful."

"Ay, wonderful! well, never mind. It 's over now. But what was I saying?—about Louis, doctor; you 'll not desert him?"

"Certainly not."

"He 's not strong; I know that. How should he be strong, living as he has done? Not that it seemed to hurt me when I was his age."

"You had the advantage of hard work."

"That 's it. Sometimes I wish that Louis had not a shilling in the world;—that he had to trudge about with an apron round his waist as I did. But it 's too late now to think of that. If he would only marry, doctor." Dr. Thorne again expressed an opinion that no step would be so likely to reform the habits of the young heir as marriage, and repeated his advice to the father to implore his son to take a wife. "I 'll tell you what, Thorne," said he. And then, after a pause he went on. "I have not half told you as yet what is on my mind; and I 'm nearly afraid to tell it. Though, indeed, I don't know why I should be."

"I never knew you afraid of anything yet," said the doctor, smiling gently.

"Well, then, I 'll not end turning coward. Now, doctor, tell the truth to me. What do you expect me to do for that girl of yours that we were talking of;—Mary's child?" There was a pause for a moment, for Thorne was slow to answer him. "You would not let me see her, you know, though she is my niece as truly as she is yours."

"Nothing," at last said the doctor, slowly. "I expect nothing. I would not let you see her, and therefore I expect nothing."

"She will have it all if poor Louis should die," said Sir Roger.

"If you intend it so you should put her name into the will," said the other. "Not that I ask you or wish you to do so. Mary, thank God, can do without wealth."

"Thorne, on one condition I will put her name into it. I will alter it all on one condition. Let the two cousins be man and wife;—let Louis marry poor Mary's child."

The proposition for a moment took away the doctor's breath, and he was unable to answer. Not for all the wealth of India would he have given up his lamb to that young wolf, even though he had had the power to do so. But that lamb,—lamb though she was,—had, as he well knew, a will of her own on such a matter. What alliance could be more impossible, thought he to himself, than one between Mary Thorne and Louis Scatcherd!

"I will alter it all if you will give me your hand upon it that you will do your best to bring about this marriage. Everything shall be his on the day he marries her; and should he die unmarried, it shall all then be hers by name. Say the word, Thorne, and she shall come here at once. I shall yet have time to see her." But Dr. Thorne did not say the word; just at the moment he said nothing, but he slowly shook his head. "Why not, Thorne?"

"My friend, it is impossible."

"Why impossible?"

"Her hand is not mine to dispose of, nor is her heart."

"Then let her come over herself."

"What! Scatcherd, that the son might make love to her while the father is so dangerously ill! Bid her come to look for a rich husband! That would not be seemly, would it?"

"No; not for that. Let her come merely that I may see her; that we may all know her. I will leave the matter then in your hands if you will promise me to do your best."

"But, my friend, in this matter I cannot do my best. I can do nothing. And, indeed, I may say at once, that it is altogether out of the question. I know——"

"What do you know?" said the baronet, turning on him almost angrily. "What can you know to make you say that this is impossible? Is she a pearl of such price that a man may not win her?"

"She is a pearl of great price."

"Believe me, doctor, money goes far in winning such pearls."

"Perhaps so. I know little about it. But this I do know, that money will not win her. Let us talk of something else. Believe me, it is useless for us to think of this."

"Yes; if you set your face against it obstinately. You must think very poorly of Louis if you suppose that no girl can fancy him."

"I have not said so, Scatcherd."

"To have the spending of ten thousand a year, and be a baronet's lady! Why, doctor, what is it you expect for this girl?"

"Not much, indeed; not much. A quiet heart and a quiet home; not much more."

"Thorne, if you will be ruled by me in this, she shall be the most topping woman in this county."

"My friend, my friend, why thus grieve me? Why should you thus harass yourself? I tell you it is impossible. They have never seen each other; they have nothing, and can have nothing in common; their tastes, and wishes, and pursuits are different. Besides, Scatcherd, marriages never answer that are so made; believe me, it is impossible."

The contractor threw himself back on his bed, and lay for some ten minutes perfectly quiet; so much so that the doctor began to think that he was sleeping. So thinking, and wearied with watching, Dr. Thorne was beginning to creep quietly from the room, when his companion again roused himself, almost with vehemence. "You won't do this thing for me, then?" said he.

"Do it! It is not for you or me to do such things as that. Such things must be left to those concerned themselves."

"You will not even help me?"

"Not in this thing, Sir Roger."

"Then, by ——, she shall not under any circumstances ever have a shilling of mine. Give me some of that stuff there," and he again pointed to the brandy bottle which stood ever within his sight. The doctor poured out and handed to him another small modicum of spirit. "Nonsense, man; fill the glass. I 'll stand no nonsense now. I 'll be master in my own house to the last. Give it here, I tell you. Ten thousand devils are tearing me within. You;—you could have

comforted me; but you would not. Fill the glass, I tell you."

"I should be killing you were I to do it."

"Killing me! killing me! You are always talking of killing me. Do you suppose that I am afraid to die? Do not I know how soon it is coming? Give me the brandy, I say, or I will be out across the room to fetch it."

"No, Scatcherd. I cannot give it to you; not while I am here. Do you remember how you were engaged this morning?" He had that morning taken the sacrament from the parish clergyman. "You would not wish to make me guilty of murder, would you?"

"Nonsense! You are talking nonsense; habit is second nature. I tell you I shall sink without it. Why, you know I always get it directly your back is turned. Come, I will not be bullied in my own house; give me that bottle, I say!"—and Sir Roger essayed, vainly enough, to raise himself from the bed.

"Stop, Scatcherd; I will give it you;—I will help you. It may be that habit is second nature." Sir Roger in his determined energy had swallowed, without thinking of it, the small quantity which the doctor had before poured out for him, and still held the empty glass within his hand. This the doctor now took and filled nearly to the brim.

"Come, Thorne, a bumper; a bumper for this once. 'Whatever the drink, it a bumper must be.' You stingy fellow! I would not treat you so. Well,—well!"

"It 's as full as you can hold it, Scatcherd."

"Try me; try me! my hand is a rock; at least at holding liquor." And then he drained the contents of

the glass, which were sufficient in quantity to have taken away the breath from any ordinary man.

"Ah, I 'm better now! But, Thorne, I do love a full glass; ha! ha! ha!"

There was something frightful, almost sickening in the peculiar hoarse guttural tone of his voice. The sounds came from him as though steeped in brandy, and told, all too plainly, the havoc which the alcohol had made. There was a fire too about his eyes which contrasted with his sunken cheeks. His hanging jaw, unshorn beard, and haggard face were terrible to look at. His hands and arms were hot and clammy, but so thin and wasted! Of his lower limbs the lost use had not returned to him, so that in all his efforts at vehemence he was controlled by his own want of vitality. When he supported himself, half-sitting against the pillows, he was in a continual tremor; and yet, as he boasted, he could still lift his glass steadily to his mouth. Such now was the hero of whom that ready compiler of memoirs had just finished his correct and succinct account.

After he had had his brandy, he sat glaring a while at vacancy as though he was dead to all around him, and was thinking,—thinking,—thinking of things in the infinite distance of the past.

"Shall I go now," said the doctor, "and send Lady Scatcherd to you?"

"Wait awhile, doctor; just one minute longer. So you will do nothing for Louis then?"

"I will do everything for him that I can do."

"Ah, yes! everything but the one thing that will save him. Well, I will not ask you again. But remember, Thorne, I shall alter my will to-morrow."

"Do so by all means. You may well alter it for the better. If I may advise you, you will have down your own business attorney from London. If you will let me send he will be here before to-morrow night."

"Thank you for nothing, Thorne. I can manage that matter myself. Now leave me; but remember, you have ruined that girl's fortune."

The doctor did leave him, and went not altogether happy to his room. He could not but confess to himself that he had, despite himself as it were, fed himself with hope that Mary's future might be made more secure, ay, and brighter too, by some small unheeded fraction broken off from the huge mass of her uncle's wealth. Such hope, if it had amounted to hope, was now all gone. But this was not all, nor was this the worst of it. That he had done right in utterly repudiating all idea of a marriage between Mary and her cousin,—of that he was certain enough; that no earthly consideration would have induced Mary to plight her troth to such a man;—that, with him, was as certain as doom. But how far had he done right in keeping her from the sight of her uncle? How could he justify it to himself if he had thus robbed her of her inheritance, seeing that he had done so from a selfish fear lest she, who was now all his own, should be known to the world as belonging to others rather than to him? He had taken upon him on her behalf to reject wealth as valueless; and yet he had no sooner done so than he began to consume his hours with reflecting how great to her would be the value of wealth. And thus, when Sir Roger told him, as he left the room, that he had ruined Mary's fortune, he was hardly able to bear the taunt with equanimity.

On the next morning, after paying his professional visit to his patient, and satisfying himself that the end was now drawing near with steps terribly quickened, he went down to Greshamsbury. "How long is this to last, uncle?" said his niece, with sad voice, as he again prepared to return to Boxall Hill.

"Not long, Mary; do not begrudge him a few more hours of life."

"No, I do not, uncle. I will say nothing more about it. Is his son with him?" And then, perversely enough, she persisted in asking numerous questions about Louis Scatcherd.

"Is he likely to marry, uncle?"

"I hope so, my dear."

"Will he be so very rich?"

"Yes; ultimately he will be very rich."

"He will be a baronet, will he not?"

"Yes, my dear."

"What is he like, uncle?"

"Like;—I never know what a young man is like. He is like a man with red hair."

"Uncle, you are the worst hand in describing I ever knew. If I 'd seen him for five minutes I 'd be bound to make a portrait of him; and you, if you were describing a dog, you 'd only say what colour his hair was."

"Well, he 's a little man."

"Exactly; just as I should say that Mrs. Umbleby had a red-haired little dog. I wish I had known these Scatcherds, uncle. I do so admire people that can push themselves in the world. I wish I had known Sir Roger."

"You will never know him now, Mary."

"I suppose not. I am so sorry for him. Is Lady Scatcherd nice?"

"She is an excellent woman."

"I hope I may know her some day. You are so much there now, uncle, I wonder whether you ever mention me to them. If you do, tell her from me how much I grieve for her."

That same night Dr. Thorne again found himself alone with Sir Roger. The sick man was much more tranquil, and apparently more at ease than he had been on the preceding night. He said nothing about his will, and not a word about Mary Thorne; but the doctor knew that Winterbones and a notary's clerk from Barchester had been in the bedroom a great part of the day; and, as he knew also that the great man of business was accustomed to do his most important work by the hands of such tools as these, he did not doubt but that the will had been altered and re-modelled. Indeed, he thought it more than probable, that when it was opened it would be found to be wholly different in its provisions from that which Sir Roger had already described.

"Louis is clever enough," he said; "sharp enough, I mean. He won't squander the property."

"He has good natural abilities," said the doctor.

"Excellent, excellent," said the father. "He may do well, very well, if he can only be kept from this;" and Sir Roger held up the empty wine-glass which stood by his bedside. "What a life he may have before him! And to throw it away for this!" As he spoke he took the glass and tossed it across the room. "Oh, doctor! would that it were all to begin again!"

"We all wish that, I dare say, Scatcherd."

"No; you don't wish it. You ain't worth a shilling, and yet you regret nothing. I am worth half a million in one way or the other, and I regret everything,—everything,—everything!"

"You should not think in that way, Scatcherd; you need not think so. Yesterday you told Mr. Clarke that you were comfortable in your mind." Mr. Clarke was the clergyman who had visited him.

"Of course I did. What else could I say when he asked me? It would n't have been civil to have told him that his time and words were all thrown away. But, Thorne, believe me, when a man's heart is sad,—sad,—sad to the core, a few words from a parson at the last moment will never make it all right."

"May He have mercy on you, my friend! If you will think of Him, and look to Him, He will have mercy on you."

"Well,—I will try, doctor; but would that it were all to do again. You 'll see to the old woman for my sake, won't you?"

"What, Lady Scatcherd?"

"Lady Devil! If anything angers me now it is that 'ladyship!' Her to be my lady! Why, when I came out of gaol that time, the poor creature had hardly a shoe to her foot. But it was n't her fault, Thorne; it was none of her doing. She never asked for any such nonsense."

"She has been an excellent wife, Scatcherd; and what is more, she is an excellent woman. She is, and ever will be, one of my dearest friends."

"Thank 'ee, doctor, thank 'ee. Yes; she has been a good wife; better for a poor man than a rich one; but then, that was what she was born to. You

won't let her be knocked about by them, will you, Thorne?"

Dr. Thorne again assured him that as long as he lived Lady Scatcherd should never want one true friend; in making this promise, however, he managed to drop all allusion to the obnoxious title.

"You 'll be with him as much as possible, won't you?" again asked the baronet, after lying quite silent for a quarter of an hour.

"With whom?" said the doctor, who was then all but asleep.

"With my poor boy; with Louis."

"If he will let me, I will," said the doctor.

"And, doctor, when you see a glass at his mouth, dash it down;—thrust it down, though you thrust out the teeth with it. When you see that, Thorne, tell him of his father;—tell him what his father might have been but for that; tell him how his father died like a beast, because he could not keep himself from drink."

These, reader, were the last words spoken by Sir Roger Scatcherd. As he uttered them he rose up in the bed with the same vehemence which he had shown on the former evening. But in the very act of doing so he was again struck by paralysis, and before nine on the following morning all was over.

"Oh, my man;—my own, own man!" exclaimed the widow, remembering in the paroxysm of her grief nothing but the loves of their early days; "the best, the brightest, the cleverest of them all!"

Some weeks after this Sir Roger was buried, with much pomp and ceremony, within the precincts of Barchester Cathedral; and a monument was put up to him soon after, in which he was portrayed as smooth-

ing a block of granite with a mallet and chisel; while his eagle eye, disdaining such humble work, was fixed upon some intricate mathematical instrument above him. Could Sir Roger have seen it himself, he would probably have declared, that no workman was ever worth his salt who looked one way while he rowed another.

Immediately after the funeral the will was opened, and Dr. Thorne discovered that the clauses of it were exactly identical with those which his friend had described to him some months back. Nothing had been altered; nor had the document been unfolded since that strange codicil was added, in which it was declared that Dr. Thorne knew,—and only Dr. Thorne,—who was the eldest child of the testator's only sister. At the same time, however, a joint executor with Dr. Thorne had been named,—one Mr. Stock, a man of railway fame,—and Dr. Thorne himself was made a legatee to the humble extent of a thousand pounds. A life income of a thousand pounds a year was left to Lady Scatcherd.

CHAPTER III.

WAR.

We need not follow Sir Roger to his grave, nor partake of the baked meats which were furnished for his funeral banquet. Such men as Sir Roger Scatcherd are always well buried, and we have already seen that his glories were duly told to posterity in the graphic diction of his sepulchral monument. In a few days the doctor had returned to his quiet home, and Sir Louis found himself reigning at Boxall Hill in his father's stead,—with, however, a much diminished sway, and, as he thought it, but a poor exchequer. We must soon return to him and say something of his career as a baronet; but for the present, we may go back to our more pleasant friends at Greshamsbury.

But our friends at Greshamsbury had not been making themselves pleasant,—not so pleasant to each other as circumstances would have admitted. In those days which the doctor had felt himself bound to pass, if not altogether at Boxall Hill, yet altogether away from his own home, so as to admit of his being as much as possible with his patient, Mary had been thrown more than ever with Patience Oriel, and, also, almost more than ever with Beatrice Gresham. As regarded Mary, she would doubtless have preferred the companionship of Patience, though she loved Beatrice far the best; but

she had no choice. When she went to the parsonage Beatrice came there also, and when Patience came to the doctor's house Beatrice either accompanied or followed her. Mary could hardly have rejected their society, even had she felt it wise to do so. She would in such case have been all alone, and her severance from the Greshamsbury house and household, from the big family in which she had for so many years been almost at home, would have made such solitude almost unendurable.

And then these two girls both knew,—not her secret, she had no secret, but the little history of her ill-treatment. They knew that though she had been blameless in this matter, yet she had been the one to bear the punishment; and, as girls and bosom friends, they could not but sympathise with her, and endow her with heroic attributes; make her, in fact, as we are doing, their little heroine for the nonce. This was, perhaps, not serviceable for Mary; but it was far from being disagreeable.

The tendency to finding matter for hero-worship in Mary's endurance was much stronger with Beatrice than with Miss Oriel. Miss Oriel was the elder, and naturally less afflicted with the sentimentality of romance. She had thrown herself into Mary's arms because she had seen that it was essentially necessary for Mary's comfort that she should do so. She was anxious to make her friend smile, and to smile with her. Beatrice was quite as true in her sympathy; but she rather wished that she and Mary might weep in unison, shed mutual tears, and break their hearts together.

Patience had spoken of Frank's love as a misfortune, of his conduct as erroneous and to be excused

only by his youth, and had never appeared to surmise that Mary also might be in love as well as he. But to Beatrice the affair was a tragic difficulty, admitting of no solution; a Gordian knot, not to be cut; a misery now and for ever. She would always talk about Frank when she and Mary were alone; and, to speak the truth, Mary did not stop her as she perhaps should have done. As for a marriage between them, that was impossible. Beatrice was well sure of that. It was Frank's unfortunate destiny that he must marry money,—money, and, as Beatrice sometimes thoughtlessly added, cutting Mary to the quick,—money and family also. Under such circumstances a marriage between them was quite impossible. But not the less did Beatrice declare, that she would have loved Mary as her sister-in-law had it been possible; and how worthy Frank was of a girl's love, had such love been permissible.

"It is so cruel," Beatrice would say; "so very, very cruel. You would have suited him in every way."

"Nonsense, Trichy. I should have suited him in no possible way at all;—nor he me."

"Oh, but you would—exactly! Papa loves you so well."

"And mamma! That would have been so nice."

"Yes; and mamma, too;—that is, had you had a fortune," said the daughter, naïvely. "She always liked you personally, always."

"Did she?"

"Always. And we all love you so."

"Especially Lady Alexandrina."

"That would not have signified, for Frank cannot endure the De Courcys himself."

"My dear, it does not matter one straw whom your brother can endure or not endure just at present. His character is to be formed, and his tastes and his heart also."

"Oh, Mary!—his heart."

"Yes, his heart;—not the fact of his having a heart. I think he has a heart; but he himself does not yet understand it."

"Oh, Mary! you do not know him."

Such conversations were not without danger to poor Mary's comfort. It came soon to be the case that she looked rather for this sort of sympathy from Beatrice, than for Miss Oriel's pleasant but less piquant gaiety.

So the days of the doctor's absence were passed, and so also the first week after his return. During this week it was almost daily necessary that the squire should be with him. The doctor was now the legal holder of Sir Roger's property, and, as such, the holder also of all the mortgages on Mr. Gresham's property; and it was natural that they should be much together. The doctor would not, however, go up to Greshamsbury on any other than medical business; and it therefore became necessary that the squire should be a good deal at the doctor's house.

Then the Lady Arabella became unhappy in her mind. Frank, it was true, was away at Cambridge, and had been successfully kept out of Mary's way since the suspicion of danger had fallen upon Lady Arabella's mind. Frank was away, and Mary was systematically banished, with due acknowledgment from all the powers in Greshamsbury. But this was not enough for Lady Arabella as long as her daughter still habitually consorted with the female culprit, and as long as

her husband consorted with the male culprit. It seemed to Lady Arabella at this moment as though, in banishing Mary from the house, she had in effect banished herself from the most intimate of the Greshamsbury social circles. She magnified in her own mind the importance of the conferences between the girls, and was not without some fear that the doctor might be talking the squire over into very dangerous compliance.

She resolved, therefore, on another duel with the doctor. In the first she had been pre-eminently and unexpectedly successful. No young sucking dove could have been more mild than that terrible enemy whom she had for years regarded as being too puissant for attack. In ten minutes she had vanquished him, and succeeded in banishing both him and his niece from the house without losing the value of his services. As is always the case with us, she had begun to despise the enemy she had conquered, and to think that the foe, once beaten, could never rally.

Her object was to break off all confidential intercourse between Beatrice and Mary, and to interrupt, as far as she could do it, that between the doctor and the squire. This, it may be said, could have been more easily done by skilful management within her own household. She had, however, tried that and failed. She had said much to Beatrice as to the imprudence of her friendship with Mary, and she had done this purposely before the squire; injudiciously however,—for the squire had immediately taken Mary's part, and had declared that he had no wish to see a quarrel between his family and that of the doctor;—that Mary Thorne was in every way a good girl, and an eligible

friend for his own child; and had ended by declaring, that he would not have Mary persecuted for Frank's fault. This had not been the end, nor nearly the end of what had been said on the matter at Greshamsbury; but the end, when it came, came in this wise, that Lady Arabella determined to say a few more words to the doctor as to the expediency of forbidding familiar intercourse between Mary and any of the Greshamsbury people.

With this view Lady Arabella absolutely bearded the lion in his den, the doctor in his shop. She had heard that both Mary and Beatrice were to pass a certain afternoon at the parsonage, and took that opportunity of calling at the doctor's house. A period of many years had passed since she had last so honoured that abode. Mary, indeed, had been so much one of her own family that the ceremony of calling on her had never been thought necessary; and thus, unless Mary had been absolutely ill, there would have been nothing to bring her ladyship to the house. All this she knew would add to the importance of the occasion, and she judged it prudent to make the occasion as important as it might well be.

She was so far successful that she soon found herself tête à tête with the doctor in his own study. She was no whit dismayed by the pair of human thigh-bones which lay close to his hand, and which, when he was talking in that den of his own, he was in the constant habit of handling with much energy; nor was she frightened out of her propriety even by the little child's skull which grinned at her from off the chimney-piece.

"Doctor," she said, as soon as the first complimentary greetings were over, speaking in her kindest and most

would-be-confidential tone, "Doctor, I am still uneasy about that boy of mine, and I have thought it best to come to you at once, and tell you freely what I think." The doctor bowed, and said that he was very sorry that she should have any cause of uneasiness about his young friend Frank. "Indeed, I am very uneasy, doctor; and having, as I do have, such reliance on your prudence, and such perfect confidence in your friendship, I have thought it best to come and speak to you openly." Thereupon the Lady Arabella paused, and the doctor bowed again.

"Nobody knows so well as you do the dreadful state of the squire's affairs."

"Not so very dreadful; not so very dreadful," said the doctor, mildly; "that is, as far as I know."

"Yes they are, doctor; very dreadful; very dreadful indeed. You know how much he owes to this young man. I do not, for the squire never tells anything to me; but I know that it is a very large sum of money; enough to swamp the estate and ruin Frank. Now I call that very dreadful."

"No, no, not ruin him, Lady Arabella; not ruin him, I hope."

"However, I did not come to talk to you about that. As I said before, I know nothing of the squire's affairs, and, as a matter of course, I do not ask you to tell me. But I am sure you will agree with me in this, that, as a mother, I cannot but be interested about my only son." Thereupon Lady Arabella put her cambric handkerchief to her eyes.

"Of course you are," said the doctor; "and, Lady Arabella, my opinion of Frank is such, that I feel sure that he will do well." In his energy, Dr. Thorne

brandished one of the thigh-bones almost in the lady's face.

"I hope he will; I am sure I hope he will. But, doctor, he has such dangers to contend with! He is so warm and impulsive that I fear his heart will bring him into trouble. Now, you know, unless Frank marries money he is lost." The doctor made no answer to this last appeal, but as he sat and listened a slight frown came across his brow. "He must marry money, doctor. Now we have, you see, with your assistance, contrived to separate him from dear Mary."

"With my assistance, Lady Arabella! I have given no assistance, nor have I meddled in the matter; nor will I."

"Well, doctor, perhaps not meddled; but you agreed with me, you know, that the two young people had been imprudent."

"I agreed to no such thing, Lady Arabella; never, never! I not only never agreed that Mary had been imprudent, but I will not agree to it now, and will not allow any one to assert it in my presence without contradicting it." Then the doctor worked away at the thigh-bones in a manner that did rather alarm her ladyship.

"At any rate, you thought that the young people had better be kept apart."

"No; neither did I think that. My niece, I felt sure, was safe from danger. I knew that she would do nothing that would bring either her or me to shame."

"Not to shame," said the lady, apologetically as it were, using the word perhaps not exactly in the doctor's sense.

"I felt no alarm for her," continued the doctor, "and desired no change. Frank is your son, and it is for you to look to him. You thought proper to do so by desiring Mary to absent herself from Greshamsbury."

"Oh, no, no, no!" said Lady Arabella.

"But you did, Lady Arabella; and as Greshamsbury is your home, neither I nor my niece had any ground of complaint. We acquiesced, not without much suffering, but we did acquiesce; and you, I think, can have no ground of complaint against us."

Lady Arabella had hardly expected that the doctor would reply to her mild and conciliatory exordium with so much sternness. He had yielded so easily to her on the former occasion. She did not comprehend that when she uttered her sentence of exile against Mary, she had given an order which she had the power of enforcing; but that obedience to that order had now placed Mary altogether beyond her jurisdiction. She was, therefore, a little surprised, and for a few moments overawed by the doctor's manner; but she soon recovered herself, remembering, doubtless, that fortune favours none but the brave. "I make no complaint, Dr. Thorne," she said, assuming a tone more befitting a De Courcy than that hitherto used. "I make no complaint either as regards you or Mary."

"You are very kind, Lady Arabella."

"But I think that it is my duty to put a stop, a peremptory stop to anything like a love affair between my son and your niece."

"I have not the least objection in life. If there is such a love affair, put a stop to it;—that is, if you have the power." Here the doctor was doubtless imprudent. But he had begun to think that he had

yielded sufficiently to the lady; and he had begun to resolve, also, that though it would not become him to encourage even the idea of such a marriage, he would make Lady Arabella understand that he thought his niece quite good enough for her son, and that the match, if regarded as imprudent, was to be regarded as equally imprudent on both sides. He would not suffer that Mary and her heart and feelings and interest should be altogether postponed to those of the young heir; and, perhaps, he was unconsciously encouraged in this determination by the reflection that Mary herself might perhaps become a young heiress.

"It is my duty," said Lady Arabella, repeating her words with even a stronger De Courcy intonation; "and your duty also, Dr. Thorne."

"My duty!" said he, rising from his chair and leaning on the table with the two thigh-bones. "Lady Arabella, pray understand at once, that I repudiate any such duty, and will have nothing whatever to do with it."

"But you do not mean to say that you will encourage this unfortunate boy to marry your niece?"

"The unfortunate boy, Lady Arabella,—whom, by-the-bye, I regard as a very fortunate young man,—is your son, not mine. I shall take no steps about his marriage, either one way or the other."

"You think it right, then, that your niece should throw herself in his way?"

"Throw herself in his way! What would you say if I came up to Greshamsbury, and spoke to you of your daughters in such language? What would my dear friend Mr. Gresham say, if some neighbour's wife should come and so speak to him? I will tell you

what he would say. He would quietly beg her to go back to her own home and meddle only with her own matters."

This was dreadful to Lady Arabella. Even Dr. Thorne had never before dared thus to lower her to the level of common humanity, and liken her to any other wife in the country-side. Moreover, she was not quite sure whether he, the parish doctor, was not desiring her, the earl's daughter, to go home and mind her own business. On this first point, however, there seemed to be room for doubt, of which she gave herself the benefit. "It would not become me to argue with you, Dr. Thorne," she said.

"Not at least on this subject," said he.

"I can only repeat that I mean nothing offensive to our dear Mary; for whom, I think I may say I have always shown almost a mother's care."

"Neither am I, nor is Mary, ungrateful for the kindness she has received at Greshamsbury."

"But I must do my duty. My own children must be my first consideration."

"Of course they must, Lady Arabella; that 's of course."

"And therefore I have called on you to say that I think it is imprudent that Beatrice and Mary should be so much together."

The doctor had been standing during the latter part of this conversation, but now he began to walk about, still holding the two bones like a pair of dumb-bells. "God bless my soul!" he said. "God bless my soul! Why, Lady Arabella, do you suspect your own daughter as well as your own son? Do you think that Beatrice is assisting Mary in preparing this wicked, clandes-

tine marriage? I tell you fairly, Lady Arabella, the present tone of your mind is such that I cannot understand it."

"I suspect nobody, Dr. Thorne; but young people will be young."

"And old people must be old, I suppose. The more 's the pity. Lady Arabella, Mary is the same to me as my own daughter, and owes me the obedience of a child; but as I do not disapprove of your daughter Beatrice as an acquaintance for her, but rather, on the other hand, regard with pleasure their friendship, you cannot expect that I should take any steps to put an end to it."

"But suppose it should lead to renewed intercourse between Frank and Mary?"

"I have no objection. Frank is a very nice young fellow, gentlemanlike in his manners, and neighbourly in his disposition."

"Doctor Thorne!"

"Lady Arabella!"

"I cannot believe that you really intend to express a wish——"

"You are quite right. I have not intended to express any wish; nor do I intend to do so. Mary is at liberty, within certain bounds,—which I am sure she will not pass,—to choose her own friends. I think she has not chosen badly as regards Miss Beatrice Gresham; and should she even add Frank Gresham to the number——"

"Friends! Why they were more than friends; they were declared lovers!"

"I doubt that, Lady Arabella, because I have not heard of it from Mary. But even were it so, I do not see why I should object."

"Not object!"

"As I said before, Frank is, to my thinking, an excellent young man. Why should I object?"

"Dr. Thorne!" said her ladyship, now also rising from her chair in a state of too evident perturbation.

"Why should I object? It is for you, Lady Arabella, to look after your lambs; for me to see that, if possible, no harm shall come to mine. If you think that Mary is an improper acquaintance for your children, it is for you to guide them;—for you and for their father. Say what you think fit to your own daughter; but pray understand, once for all, that I will allow no one to interfere with my niece."

"Interfere!" said Lady Arabella, now absolutely confused by the severity of the doctor's manner.

"I will allow no one to interfere with her; no one, Lady Arabella. She has suffered very greatly from imputations which you have most unjustly thrown on her. It was, however, your undoubted right, to turn her out of your house if you thought fit;—though, as a woman who had known her for so many years, you might, I think, have treated her with more forbearance. That, however, was your right, and you exercised it. There your privilege stops. Yes, and must stop, Lady Arabella. You shall not persecute her here, on the only spot of ground she can call her own."

"Persecute her, Doctor Thorne! You do not mean to say that I have persecuted her?"

"Ah, but I do mean to say so! You do persecute her, and would continue to do so did I not defend her. It is not sufficient that she is forbidden to enter your domain,—and so forbidden with the knowledge of all the country round,—but you must come here

also with the hope of interrupting all the innocent pleasures of her life. Fearing lest she should be allowed even to speak of your son, to hear a word of him through his own sister, you would put her in prison, tie her up, keep her from the light of day!"

"Dr. Thorne! how can you."

But the doctor was not to be interrupted. "It never occurs to you to tie him up, to put him in prison. No; he is the heir to Greshamsbury; he is your son, an earl's grandson. It is only natural, after all, that he should throw a few foolish words at the doctor's niece. But she! it is an offence not to be forgiven on her part that she should, however unwillingly, have been forced to listen to them! Now understand me, Lady Arabella; if any of your family come to my house I shall be delighted to welcome them; if Mary should meet any of them elsewhere I shall be delighted to hear of it. Should she tell me to-morrow that she was engaged to marry Frank, I should talk over the matter with her, quite coolly, solely with a view to her interest, as would be my duty;—feeling, at the same time, that Frank would be lucky in having such a wife. Now you know my mind, Lady Arabella. It is so I should do my duty. You can do yours as you may think fit."

Lady Arabella had by this time perceived that she was not destined on this occasion to gain any great victory. She, however, was angry as well as the doctor. It was not the man's vehemence that provoked her so much as his evident determination to break down the prestige of her rank, and place her on a footing in no respect superior to his own. He had never before been so audaciously arrogant; and, as she

moved towards the door, she determined in her wrath that she would never again have confidential intercourse with him in any relation of life whatsoever.

"Dr. Thorne," said she, "I think you have forgotten yourself. You must excuse me if I say that after what has passed I—I—I——"

"Certainly," said he, fully understanding what she meant; and bowing low as he opened first the study door, then the front door, then the garden-gate. Lady Arabella stalked off, not without full observation from Mrs. Yates Umbleby and her friend Miss Gushing, who lived close by.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS THORNE GOES ON A VISIT.

And now began the unpleasant things at Greshamsbury of which we have here told. When Lady Arabella walked away from the doctor's house she resolved that, let it cost what it might, there should be war to the knife between her and him. She had been insulted by him,—so at least she said to herself, and so she was prepared to say to others also,—and it was not to be borne that a De Courcy should allow her parish doctor to insult her with impunity. She would tell her husband with all the dignity that she could assume, that it had now become absolutely necessary that he should protect his life by breaking entirely with his unmannered neighbour; and, as regarded the young members of her family, she would use the authority of a mother, and absolutely forbid them to hold any intercourse with Mary Thorne. So resolved, she walked quickly back to her own house.

The doctor, when left alone, was not quite satisfied with the part he had taken in the interview. He had spoken from impulse rather than from judgment, and, as is generally the case with men who do so speak, he had afterwards to acknowledge to himself that he had been imprudent. He accused himself probably of more violence than he had really used, and was therefore unhappy; but, nevertheless, his indignation was

not at rest. He was angry with himself, but not on that account the less angry with Lady Arabella. She was cruel, overbearing, and unreasonable; cruel in the most cruel of manners, so he thought; but not on that account was he justified in forgetting the forbearance due from a gentleman to a lady. Mary, moreover, had owed much to the kindness of this woman, and, therefore, Dr. Thorne felt that he should have forgiven much. Thus the doctor walked about his room, much disturbed; now accusing himself for having been so angry with Lady Arabella, and then feeding his own anger by thinking of her misconduct.

The only immediate conclusion at which he resolved was this, that it was unnecessary that he should say anything to Mary on the subject of her ladyship's visit. There was, no doubt, sorrow enough in store for his darling. Why should he aggravate it? Lady Arabella would doubtless not stop now in her course. But why should he accelerate the evil which she would doubtless be able to effect?

Lady Arabella, when she returned to the house, allowed no grass to grow under her feet. As she entered the house she desired that Miss Beatrice should be sent to her directly she returned; and she desired also, that as soon as the squire should be in his room a message to that effect might be immediately brought to her.

"Beatrice," she said, as soon as the young lady appeared before her,—and in speaking she assumed her firmest tone of authority,—"Beatrice, I am sorry, my dear, to say anything that is unpleasant to you, but I must make it a positive request that you will for the future drop all intercourse with Dr. Thorne's family."

Beatrice, who had received Lady Arabella's message immediately on entering the house, and had run upstairs imagining that some instant haste was required, now stood before her mother rather out of breath, holding her bonnet by the strings.

"Oh, mamma!" she exclaimed, "what on earth has happened?"

"My dear," said the mother, "I cannot really explain to you what has happened; but I must ask you to give me your positive assurance that you will comply with my request."

"You don't mean that I am not to see Mary any more?"

"Yes, I do, my dear. When I tell you that your brother's interest imperatively demands it, I am sure that you will not refuse me."

Beatrice did not refuse, but she did not appear too willing to comply. She stood silent, leaning against the end of a sofa and twisting her bonnet-strings in her hand.

"Well, Beatrice!"

"But, mamma, I don't understand."

Lady Arabella had said that she could not exactly explain, but she found it necessary to attempt to do so. "Dr. Thorne has openly declared to me that a marriage between poor Frank and Mary is all that he could desire for his niece. After such unparalleled audacity as that even your father will see the necessity of breaking with him."

"Dr. Thorne! Oh, mamma, you must have misunderstood him!"

"My dear, I am not apt to misunderstand people;—especially when I am so much in earnest as I was in talking to Dr. Thorne."

"But, mamma, I know so well what Mary herself thinks about it."

"And I know what Dr. Thorne thinks about it; he, at any rate, has been candid in what he has said; there can be no doubt on earth that he has spoken his true thoughts. There can be no reason to doubt him. Of course such a match would be all that he could wish."

"Mamma, I feel sure that there is some mistake."

"Very well, my dear. I know that you are infatuated about these people, and that you are always inclined to contradict what I say to you; but, remember, I expect that you will obey me when I tell you not to go to Dr. Thorne's house any more."

"But, mamma——"

"I expect you to obey me, Beatrice. Though you are so prone to contradict, you have never disobeyed me; and I fully trust that you will not do so now." Lady Arabella had begun by exacting, or trying to exact a promise; but as she found that this was not forthcoming, she thought it better to give up the point without a dispute. It might be that Beatrice would absolutely refuse to pay this respect to her mother's authority, and then where would she have been?

At this moment a servant came up to say that the squire was in his room, and Lady Arabella was opportunely saved the necessity of discussing the matter further with her daughter. "I am now," she said, "going to see your father on the same subject. You may be quite sure, Beatrice, that I should not willingly speak to him on any matter relating to Dr. Thorne did I not find it absolutely necessary to do so." This Beatrice knew was true, and she did therefore feel convinced that something terrible must have happened.

While Lady Arabella opened her budget the squire sat quite silent, listening to her with apparent respect. She found it necessary that her description to him should be much more elaborate than that which she had vouchsafed to her daughter, and, in telling her grievance, she insisted most especially on the personal insult which had been offered to herself. "After what has now happened," said she, not quite able to repress a tone of triumph as she spoke, "I do expect, Mr. Gresham, that you will—will——"

"Will what, my dear?"

"Will at least protect me from the repetition of such treatment?"

"You are not afraid that Dr. Thorne will come here to attack you? As far as I can understand, he never comes near the place, unless when you send for him."

"No; I do not think that he will come to Greshamsbury any more. I believe I have put a stop to that."

"Then what is it, my dear, that you want me to do?"

Lady Arabella paused a minute before she replied. The game which she now had to play was not very easy; she knew, or thought she knew, that her husband, in his heart of hearts, much preferred his friend to the wife of his bosom, and that he would, if he could, shuffle out of noticing the doctor's iniquities. It behoved her, therefore, to put them forward in such a way that they must be noticed. "I suppose, Mr. Gresham, you do not wish that Frank should marry the girl?"

"I do not think that there is the slightest chance of such a thing; and I am quite sure that Dr. Thorne would not encourage it."

"But I tell you, Mr. Gresham, that he says that he will encourage it."

"Oh, you have misunderstood him!"

"Of course; I always misunderstand everything. I know that. I misunderstood it when I told you how you would distress yourself if you took those nasty hounds."

"I have had other troubles more expensive than the hounds," said the poor squire, sighing.

"Oh, yes; I know what you mean; a wife and family are expensive, of course. It is a little too late now to complain of that."

"My dear, it is always too late to complain of any troubles when they are no longer to be avoided. We need not, therefore, talk any more about the hounds at present."

"I do not wish to speak of them, Mr. Gresham."

"Nor I."

"But I hope you will not think me unreasonable if I am anxious to know what you intend to do about Dr. Thorne."

"To do?"

"Yes; I suppose you will do something. You do not wish to see your son marry such a girl as Mary Thorne."

"As far as the girl herself is concerned," said the squire, turning rather red, "I am not sure that he could do much better. I know nothing whatever against Mary. Frank, however, cannot afford to make such a match. It would be his ruin."

"Of course it would; utter ruin! He never could hold up his head again. Therefore it is I ask, What is it you intend to do?" The squire was bothered. He

had no intention whatever of doing anything, and no belief in his wife's assertion as to Dr. Thorne's iniquity. But he did not know how to get her out of the room. She asked him the same question over and over again, and on each occasion urged on him the heinousness of the insult to which she personally had been subjected; so that at last, he was driven to ask her what it was she wished him to do. "Well, then, Mr. Gresham, if you ask me, I must say, that I think you should abstain from any intercourse with Dr. Thorne whatever."

"Break off all intercourse with him?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean? He has been turned out of this house, and I 'm not to go to see him at his own?"

"I certainly think that you ought to discontinue your visits to Dr. Thorne altogether."

"Nonsense, my dear; absolute nonsense."

"Nonsense! Mr. Gresham! It is no nonsense. As you speak in that way, I must let you know plainly what I feel. I am endeavouring to do my duty by my son. As you justly observe, such a marriage as this would be utter ruin to him. When I found that the young people were actually talking of being in love with each other, making vows and all that sort of thing, I did think it time to interfere. I did not, however, turn them out of Greshamsbury, as you accuse me of doing. In the kindest possible manner——"

"Well,—well,—well; I know all that. There, they are gone, and that 's enough. I don't complain; surely that ought to be enough."

"Enough! Mr. Gresham. No; it is not enough. I find that, in spite of what has occurred, the closest intimacy exists between the two families; that poor

Beatrice, who is so very young, and not so prudent as she should be, is made to act as a go-between; and when I speak to the doctor, hoping that he will assist me in preventing this, he not only tells me that he means to encourage Mary in her plans, but positively insults me to my face, laughs at me for being an earl's daughter, and tells me,—yes, he absolutely told me,—to get out of his house."

Let it be told with some shame as to the squire's conduct, that his first feeling on hearing this was one of envy,—of envy and regret that he could not make the same uncivil request. Not that he wished to turn his wife absolutely out of his house; but he would have been very glad to have had the power of dismissing her summarily from his own room. This, however, was at present impossible; so he was obliged to make some mild reply. "You must have mistaken him, my dear. He could not have intended to say that."

"Oh, of course, Mr. Gresham! It is all a mistake, of course. It will be a mistake, only a mistake, when you find your son married to Mary Thorne."

"Well, my dear, I cannot undertake to quarrel with Dr. Thorne." This was true; for the squire could hardly have quarrelled with Dr. Thorne, even had he wished it.

"Then I think it right to tell you that I shall. And, Mr. Gresham, I did not expect much co-operation from you; but I did think that you would have shown some little anger when you heard that I had been so ill-treated. I shall, however, know how to take care of myself; and I shall continue to do the best I can to protect Frank from these wicked intrigues."

So saying, her ladyship arose and left the room,

having succeeded in destroying the comfort of all our Greshamsbury friends. It was very well for the squire to declare that he would not quarrel with Dr. Thorne, and of course he did not do so. But he, himself, had no wish whatever that his son should marry Mary Thorne; and as a falling drop will hollow a stone, so did the continual harping of his wife on the subject give rise to some amount of suspicion in his own mind. Then as to Beatrice, though she had made no promise that she would not again visit Mary, she was by no means prepared to set her mother's authority altogether at defiance; and she also was sufficiently uncomfortable.

Dr. Thorne said nothing of the matter to his niece, and she, therefore, would have been absolutely bewildered by Beatrice's absence, had she not received some tidings of what had taken place at Greshamsbury through Patience Oriel. Beatrice and Patience discussed the matter fully, and it was agreed between them that it would be better that Mary should know what sterner orders respecting her had gone forth from the tyrant at Greshamsbury, and that she might understand that Beatrice's absence was compulsory. Patience was thus placed in this position, that on one day she walked and talked with Beatrice, and on the next with Mary; and so matters went on for a while at Greshamsbury,—not very pleasantly.

Very unpleasantly and very uncomfortably did the months of May and June pass away. Beatrice and Mary occasionally met, drinking tea together at the parsonage, or in some other of the ordinary meetings of country society; but there were no more romantically distressing confidential discourses, no more whis-

pering of Frank's name, no more sweet allusions to the inexpediency of a passion, which, according to Beatrice's views, would have been so delightful had it been expedient.

The squire and doctor also met constantly. There were unfortunately many subjects on which they were obliged to meet. Louis Philippe,—or Sir Louis as we must call him,—though he had no power over his own property, was wide-awake to all the coming privileges of ownership, and he would constantly point out to his guardian the manner in which, according to his ideas, the most should be made of it. The young baronet's ideas of good taste were not of the most refined description, and he did not hesitate to tell Dr. Thorne that his, the doctor's, friendship with Mr. Gresham, should be no bar to his, the baronet's, interest. Sir Louis also had his own lawyer, who gave Dr. Thorne to understand that, according to his ideas, the sum due on Mr. Gresham's property was too large to be left on its present footing. The title-deeds, he said, should be surrendered or the mortgage foreclosed. All this added to the sadness which now seemed to envelope the village of Greshamsbury.

Early in July Frank was to come home. The manner in which the comings and goings of "poor Frank" were allowed to disturb the arrangements of all the ladies, and some of the gentlemen, of Greshamsbury was most abominable. And yet it can hardly be said to have been his fault. He would have been only too well pleased had things been allowed to go on after their old fashion. Things were not allowed so to go on. At Christmas Miss Oriel had submitted to be exiled, in order that she might carry Mary away

from the presence of the young Bashaw, an arrangement by which all the winter festivities of the poor doctor had been thoroughly sacrificed; and now it began to be said that some similar plan for the summer must be suggested.

It must not be supposed that any direction to this effect was conveyed either to Mary or to the doctor. The suggestion came from them, and was mentioned only to Patience. But Patience, as a matter of course, told Beatrice, and Beatrice told her mother, somewhat triumphantly, hoping thereby to convince the she-dragon of Mary's innocence. Alas! she-dragons are not easily convinced of the innocence of any one. Lady Arabella quite coincided in the propriety of Mary's being sent off,—whither she never inquired,—in order that the coast might be clear for "poor Frank;" but she did not a whit the more abstain from talking of the wicked intrigues of those Thornes. As it turned out, Mary's absence caused her to talk the more.

The Boxall Hill property, including the house and furniture, had been left to the contractor's son; it being understood that the property would not be at present in his own hands, but that he might inhabit the house if he chose to do so. It would thus be necessary for Lady Scatcherd to find a home for herself unless she could remain at Boxall Hill by her son's permission. In this position of affairs the doctor had been obliged to make a bargain between them. Sir Louis did wish to have the comfort, or perhaps the honour, of a country house; but he did not wish to have the expense of keeping it up. He was also willing to let his mother live at the house; but not with-

out a consideration. After a prolonged degree of haggling, terms were agreed upon; and a few weeks after her husband's death, Lady Scatcherd found herself alone at Boxall Hill,—alone as regards society in the ordinary sense, but not quite alone as concerned her ladyship, for the faithful Hannah was still with her.

The doctor was of course often at Boxall Hill, and never left it without an urgent request from Lady Scatcherd that he would bring his niece over to see her. Now Lady Scatcherd was no fit companion for Mary Thorne, and though Mary had often asked to be taken to Boxall Hill, certain considerations had hitherto induced the doctor to refuse the request. But there was that about Lady Scatcherd,—a kind of homely honesty of purpose, an absence of all conceit as to her own position, and a strength of womanly confidence in the doctor as her friend, which by degrees won upon his heart. When, therefore, both he and Mary felt that it would be better for her again to absent herself for a while from Greshamsbury, it was, after much deliberation, agreed that she should go on a visit to Boxall Hill.

To Boxall Hill, accordingly, she went, and was received almost as a princess. Mary had all her life been accustomed to women of rank, and had never habituated herself to feel much trepidation in the presence of titled grandees; but she had prepared herself to be more than ordinarily submissive to Lady Scatcherd. Her hostess was a widow, was not a woman of high birth, was a woman of whom her uncle spoke well; and, for all these reasons, Mary was determined to respect her and pay to her every consideration. But when she was settled down in the

house she found it almost impossible to do so. Lady Scatcherd treated her as a farmer's wife might have treated some convalescent young lady who had been sent to her charge for a few weeks, in order that she might benefit by the country air. Her ladyship could hardly bring herself to sit still and eat her dinner tranquilly in her guest's presence. And then nothing was good enough for Mary. Lady Scatcherd besought her, almost with tears, to say what she liked best to eat and drink; and was in despair when Mary declared she did n't care, that she liked anything, and that she was in no wise particular in such matters. "A roast fowl, Miss Thorne?"

"Very nice, Lady Scatcherd."

"And bread sauce?"

"Bread sauce;—yes; oh, yes—I like bread sauce,"—and poor Mary tried hard to show a little interest.

"And just a few sausages. We make them all in the house, Miss Thorne. We know what they are. And mashed potatoes. Do you like them best mashed or baked?" Mary, finding herself obliged to vote, voted for mashed potatoes. "Very well. But, Miss Thorne, if you would like boiled fowl better, with a little bit of ham, you know, I do hope you 'll say so. And there 's lamb in the house, quite beautiful; now do'ee say something; do'ee, Miss Thorne."

So invoked, Mary felt herself obliged to say something, and declared for the roast fowl and sausages; but she found it very difficult to pay much outward respect to a person who would pay so much outward respect to her. A day or two after her arrival it was decided that she should ride about the place on a donkey; she was accustomed to riding, the doctor having

generally taken care that one of his own horses should, when required, consent to carry a lady. But there was no steed at Boxall Hill that she could mount; and when Lady Scatcherd had offered to get a pony for her, she had willingly compromised matters by expressing the delight she would have in making a campaign on a donkey. Upon this Lady Scatcherd had herself set off in quest of the desired animal, much to Mary's horror; and did not return till the necessary purchase had been effected. Then she came back with the donkey close at her heels, almost holding its collar, and stood there at the hall-door till Mary came to approve. "I hope she 'll do. I don't think she 'll kick," said Lady Scatcherd, patting the head of her purchase quite triumphantly.

"Oh, you are so kind, Lady Scatcherd! I 'm sure she 'll do quite nicely; she seems to be very quiet," said Mary.

"Please, my lady, it 's a he," said the boy who held the halter.

"Oh! a he, is it?" said her ladyship; "but the he-donkeys are quite as quiet as the shes, ain't they?"

"Oh, yes, my lady; a deal quieter, all the world over;—and twice as useful!"

"I 'm so glad of that, Miss Thorne," said Lady Scatcherd, her eyes bright with joy. And so Mary was established with her donkey, who did all that could be expected from an animal in his position.

"But, dear Lady Scatcherd," said Mary, as they sat together at the open drawing-room window the same evening, "you must not go on calling me Miss Thorne. My name is Mary, you know. Won't you call me Mary?" and she came and knelt at Lady Scatcherd's

feet, and took hold of her, looking up into her face. Lady Scatcherd's cheeks became rather red, as though she was somewhat ashamed of her position. "You are so very kind to me," continued Mary, "and it seems so cold to hear you call me Miss Thorne."

"Well, Miss Thorne, I 'm sure I 'd call you anything to please you. Only I did n't know whether you 'd like it from me. Else I do think Mary is the prettiest name in all the language."

"I should like it very much."

"My dear Roger always loved that name better than any other;—ten times better. I used to wish sometimes that I 'd been called Mary."

"Did he! Why?"

"He once had a sister called Mary; such a beautiful creature! I declare, I sometimes think you are like her!"

"Oh, dear! then she must have been beautiful indeed," said Mary, laughing.

"She was very beautiful. I just remember her,—oh, so beautiful! she was quite a poor girl, you know; and so was I then. Is n't it odd that I should have to be called 'my lady' now? Do you know, Miss Thorne——"

"Mary! Mary!" said her guest.

"Ah, yes; but somehow I hardly like to make so free; but, as I was saying, I do so dislike being called 'my lady:' I always think the people are laughing at me; and so they are!"

"Oh, nonsense!"

"Yes they are, though. Poor dear Roger, he used to call me 'my lady' just to make fun of me; I did n't mind it so much from him. But, Miss Thorne——"

"Mary, Mary, Mary."

"Ah, well! I shall do it in time. But, Miss—Mary, ha! ha! ha! never mind, let me alone. But what I want to say is this: do you think I could drop it? Hannah says, that if I go the right way about it, she is sure I can."

"Oh, but Lady Scatcherd, you should n't think of such a thing!"

"Should n't I now?"

"Oh, no; for your husband's sake you should be proud of it! He gained great honour, you know."

"Ah, well!" said she, sighing after a short pause; "if you think it will do him any good, of course I 'll put up with it. And then I know Louis would be mad if I talked of such a thing. But, Miss Thorne, dear, a woman like me don't like to have to be made a fool of all the days of her life if she can help it."

"But, Lady Scatcherd," said Mary, when this question of the title had been duly settled, and her ladyship made to understand that she must bear the burden for the rest of her life, "but, Lady Scatcherd, you were speaking of Sir Roger's sister. What became of her?"

"Oh, she did very well at last, as Sir Roger did himself; but in early life she was very unfortunate, just at the time of my marriage with dear Roger—" and then, just as she was about to commence so much as she knew of the history of Mary Scatcherd, she remembered that the author of her sister-in-law's misery had been a Thorne, a brother of the doctor; and, therefore, as she presumed, a relative of her guest; and suddenly she became mute.

"Well," said Mary; "just as you were married, Lady Scatcherd?"

Poor Lady Scatcherd had very little worldly knowledge, and did not in the least know how to turn the conversation or escape from the trouble into which she had fallen. All manner of reflections began to crowd upon her. In her early days she had known very little of the Thornes, nor had she thought much of them since, except as regarded her friend the doctor; but at this moment she began for the first time to remember that she had never heard of more than two brothers in the family. Who then could have been Mary's father? She felt at once that it would be improper for her to say anything as to Henry Thorne's terrible faults and sudden fate;—improper, also, to say more about Mary Scatcherd; but she was quite unable to drop the matter otherwise than abruptly, and with a start.

"She was very unfortunate, you say, Lady Scatcherd?"

"Yes, Miss Thorne; Mary, I mean,—never mind me, I shall do it in time. Yes, she was; but now I think of it, I had better say nothing more about it. There are reasons, and I ought not to have spoken of it. You won't be provoked with me, will you?"

Mary assured her that she would not be provoked, and of course asked no more questions about Mary Scatcherd; nor did she think much more about it. It was not so, however, with her ladyship, who could not keep herself from reflecting that the old clergyman in the close at Barchester certainly had but two sons, one of whom was now the doctor at Greshamsbury, and the other of whom had perished so wretchedly at the gate of that farm-yard. Who then was the father of Mary Thorne?

The days passed very quietly at Boxall Hill. Every

morning Mary went out on her donkey, who justified by his demeanour all that had been said in his praise; then she would read or draw, then walk with Lady Scatcherd, then dine, then walk again; and so the days passed quietly away. Once or twice a week the doctor would come over and drink his tea there, riding home in the cool of the evening. Mary also received one visit from her friend Patience.

So the days passed quietly away till the tranquillity of the house was suddenly broken by tidings from London. Lady Scatcherd received a letter from her son, contained in three lines, in which he intimated that on the following day he meant to honour her with a visit. He had intended, he said, to have gone to Brighton with some friends; but as he felt himself a little out of sorts, he would postpone his marine trip and do his mother the grace of spending a few days with her.

This news was not very pleasant to Mary, by whom it had been understood, as it had also by her uncle, that Lady Scatcherd would have had the house to herself; but as there were no means of preventing the evil Mary could only inform the doctor and prepare herself to meet Sir Louis Scatcherd.

CHAPTER V.

THE DOCTOR HEARS SOMETHING TO HIS ADVANTAGE.

Sir Louis Scatcherd had told his mother that he was rather out of sorts, and when he reached Boxall Hill it certainly did not appear that he had given any exaggerated statement of his own maladies. He certainly was a good deal out of sorts. He had had more than one attack of delirium tremens since his father's death, and had almost been at death's door.

Nothing had been said about this by Dr. Thorne at Boxall Hill; but he was by no means ignorant of his ward's state. Twice he had gone up to London to visit him; twice he had begged him to go down into the country and place himself under his mother's care. On the last occasion, the doctor had threatened him with all manner of pains and penalties: with pains, as to his speedy departure from this world and all its joys; and with penalties, in the shape of poverty if that departure should by any chance be retarded. But these threats had at the moment been in vain, and the doctor had compromised matters by inducing Sir Louis to promise that he would go to Brighton. The baronet, however, who was at length frightened by some renewed attack, gave up his Brighton scheme, and, without any notice to the doctor, hurried down to Boxall Hill.

Mary did not see him on the first day of his coming, but the doctor did. He received such intimation of the visit as enabled him to be at the house soon after the young man's arrival; and knowing that his assistance might be necessary, he rode over to Boxall Hill. It was a dreadful task to him, this of making the same fruitless endeavour for the son that he had made for the father, and in the same house. But he was bound by every consideration to perform the task. He had promised the father that he would do for the son all that was in his power: and he had, moreover, the consciousness, that should Sir Louis succeed in destroying himself, the next heir to all the property was his own niece, Mary Thorne.

He found Sir Louis in a low, wretched, miserable state. Though he was a drunkard as his father was, he was not at all such a drunkard as was his father. The physical capacities of the men were very different. The daily amount of alcohol which the father had consumed would have burnt up the son in a week; whereas, though the son was continually tipsy, what he swallowed would hardly have had an injurious effect upon the father.

"You are all wrong, quite wrong," said Sir Louis, petulantly; "it is n't that at all. I have taken nothing this week past,—literally nothing. I think it 's the liver."

Dr. Thorne wanted no one to tell him what was the matter with his ward. It was his liver; his liver, and his head, and his stomach, and his heart. Every organ in his body had been destroyed, or was in course of destruction. His father had killed himself with brandy; the son, more elevated in his tastes, was doing

the same thing with curaçoa, maraschino, and cherry-bounce.

"Sir Louis," said the doctor—he was obliged to be much more punctilious with him than he had been with the contractor—"the matter is in your own hands entirely. If you cannot keep your lips from that accursed poison, you have nothing in this world to look forward to;—nothing, nothing!"

Mary proposed to return with her uncle to Greshamsbury, and he was at first well inclined that she should do so. But this idea was overruled, partly in compliance with Lady Scatcherd's entreaties, and partly because it would have seemed as though they had both thought the presence of its owner had made the house an unfit habitation for decent people. The doctor therefore returned, leaving Mary there; and Lady Scatcherd busied herself between her two guests.

On the next day Sir Louis was able to come down to a late dinner, and Mary was introduced to him. He had dressed himself in his best array; and as he had,—at any rate for the present moment,—been frightened out of his libations, he was prepared to make himself as agreeable as possible. His mother waited on him almost as a slave might have done; but she seemed to do so with the fear of a slave rather than the love of a mother. She was fidgety in her attentions, and worried him by endeavouring to make her evening sitting-room agreeable.

But Sir Louis, though he was not very sweetly behaved under these manipulations from his mother's hands, was quite complaisant to Miss Thorne;—nay, after the expiration of a week he was almost more than complaisant. He piqued himself on his gallantry, and

now found that, in the otherwise dull seclusion of Boxall Hill, he had a good opportunity of exercising it. To do him justice it must be admitted that he would not have been incapable of a decent career had he stumbled upon some girl who could have loved him before he stumbled upon his maraschino bottle. Such might have been the case with many a lost rake. The things that are bad are accepted because the things that are good do not come easily in his way. How many a miserable father reviles with bitterness of spirit the low tastes of his son, who has done nothing to provide his child with higher pleasures!

Sir Louis,—partly in the hope of Mary's smiles, and partly frightened by the doctor's threats,—did, for a while, keep himself within decent bounds. He did not usually appear before Mary's eyes till three or four in the afternoon; but when he did come forth, he came forth sober and resolute to please. His mother was delighted, and was not slow to sing his praises; and even the doctor, who now visited Boxall Hill more frequently than ever, began to have some hopes.

One constant subject, I must not say of conversation, on the part of Lady Scatcherd, but rather of declamation, had hitherto been the beauty and manly attributes of Frank Gresham. She had hardly ceased to talk to Mary of the infinite good qualities of the young squire, and especially of his prowess in the matter of Mr. Moffat. Mary had listened to all this eloquence, not perhaps with inattention, but without much reply. She had not been exactly sorry to hear Frank talked about. Indeed, had she been so minded, she could herself have said something on the same subject. But she did not wish to take Lady Scatcherd altogether into

her confidence, and she had been unable to say much about Frank Gresham without doing so. Lady Scatcherd had, therefore, gradually conceived the idea that her darling was not a favourite with her guest.

Now, therefore, she changed the subject; and, as her own son was behaving with such unexampled propriety, she dropped Frank and confined her eulogies to Louis. He had been a little wild she admitted; young men so often were so; but she hoped that it was now over. "He does still take a little drop of those French drinks in the morning," said Lady Scatcherd, in her confidence; for she was too honest to be false, even in her own cause. "He does do that, I know: but that's nothing, my dear, to swilling all day; and everything can't be done at once, can it, Miss Thorne?"

On this subject Mary found her tongue loosened. She could not talk about Frank Gresham, but she could speak with hope to the mother of her only son. She could say that Sir Louis was still very young; that there was reason to trust that he might now reform; that his present conduct was apparently good; and that he appeared capable of better things. So much she did say; and the mother took her sympathy for more than it was worth.

On this matter, and on this matter perhaps alone, Sir Louis and Lady Scatcherd were in accord. There was much to recommend Mary to the baronet. Not only did he see her to be beautiful, and perceive her to be attractive and ladylike; but she was also the niece of the man who, for the present, held the purse-strings of his wealth. Mary, it is true, had no fortune. But Sir Louis knew that she was acknowledged to be a lady; and he was ambitious that his "lady" should

be a lady. There was also much to recommend Mary to the mother, to any mother; and thus it came to pass, that Miss Thorne had no obstacle between her and the dignity of being Lady Scatcherd the second: —no obstacle whatever, if only she could bring herself to wish it.

It was some time,—two or three weeks, perhaps,— before Mary's mind was first opened to this new brilliancy in her prospects. Sir Louis at first was rather afraid of her, and did not declare his admiration in any very determined terms. He certainly paid her many compliments which, from any one else, she would have regarded as abominable. But she did not expect great things from the baronet's taste: she concluded that he was only doing what he thought a gentleman should do; and she was willing to forgive much for Lady Scatcherd's sake.

His first attempts were, perhaps, more ludicrous than passionate. He was still too much an invalid to take walks, and Mary was therefore saved from his company in her rambles; but he had a horse of his own at Boxall Hill, and had been advised to ride by the doctor. Mary also rode,—on a donkey only, it is true, —but Sir Louis found himself bound in gallantry to accompany her. Mary's steed had answered every expectation, and proved himself very quiet; so quiet that, without the admonition of a cudgel behind him, he could hardly be persuaded into the demurest trot. Now, as Sir Louis' horse was of a very different mettle, he found it rather difficult not to step faster than his inamorata; and, let him struggle as he would, was generally so far ahead as to be debarred the delights of conversation

When for the second time he proposed to accompany her Mary did what she could to hinder it. She saw that he had been rather ashamed of the manner in which his companion was mounted, and she herself would have enjoyed her ride much more without him. He was an invalid, however; it was necessary to make much of him, and Mary did not absolutely refuse his offer.

"Lady Scatcherd," said he, as they were standing at the door previous to mounting,—he always called his mother Lady Scatcherd,—"why don't you have a horse for Miss Thorne? This donkey is,—is,—really is, so very,—very,—can't go at all; you know." Lady Scatcherd began to declare that she would willingly have got a pony if Mary would have let her do so.

"Oh, no, Lady Scatcherd; not on any account. I do like the donkey so much! I do indeed."

"But he won't go," said Sir Louis. "And for a person who rides like you, Miss Thorne,—such a horsewoman you know,—why, you know, Lady Scatcherd, it 's positively ridiculous; d—— absurd, you know." And then with an angry look at his mother, he mounted his horse, and was soon leading the way down the avenue. "Miss Thorne," said he, pulling himself up at the gate, "if I had known that I was to be so extremely happy as to have found you here, I would have brought you down the most beautiful creature, an Arab. She belongs to my friend Jenkins; but I would n't have stood at any price in getting her for you. By Jove! if you were on that mare, I'd back you, for style and appearance, against anything in Hyde Park."

The offer of this sporting wager, which naturally

would have been very gratifying to Mary, was lost upon her, for Sir Louis had again unwittingly got on in advance, but he stopped himself in time to hear Mary again declare her passion was a donkey.

"If you could only see Jenkins's little mare, Miss Thorne. Only say the word, and she shall be down here before the week 's out. Price shall be no obstacle—none whatever. By Jove, what a pair you would be!" This generous offer was repeated four or five times; but on each occasion Mary only half heard what was said, and on each occasion the baronet was far too much in advance to hear Mary's reply. At last he recollected that he wanted to call on one of the tenants, and begged his companion to allow him to ride on.

"If you at all dislike being left alone, you know——"

"Oh, dear no, not at all, Sir Louis. I am quite used to it."

"Because I don't care about it, you know. Only I can't make this horse of mine walk the same pace as that brute."

"You must n't abuse my pet, Sir Louis."

"It 's a d—— shame on my mother's part," said Sir Louis, who, even when in his best behaviour, could not quite give up his ordinary mode of conversation. "When she was fortunate enough to get such a girl as you to come and stay with her, she ought to have had something proper for her to ride upon; but I 'll look to it as soon as I am a little stronger, you see if I don't." So saying, Sir Louis trotted off, leaving Mary in peace with her donkey.

Sir Louis had now been living cleanly and forswearing sack for what was to him a very long period, and

his health felt the good effects of it. No one rejoiced at this more cordially than did the doctor. To rejoice at it was with him a point of conscience. He could not help telling himself now and again that, circumstanced as he was, he was most specially bound to take joy in any sign of reformation which the baronet might show. Not to do so would be almost tantamount to wishing that he might die in order that Mary might inherit his wealth; and, therefore, the doctor did with all his energy devote himself to the difficult task of hoping and striving that Sir Louis might yet live to enjoy what was his own. But the task was altogether a difficult one, for as Sir Louis became stronger in health, so also did he become more exorbitant in his demand on the doctor's patience, and more repugnant to the doctor's tastes.

In his worst fits of disreputable living he was ashamed to apply to his guardian for money; and in his worst fits of illness he was, through fear, somewhat patient under his doctor's hands; but just at present he had nothing of which to be ashamed, and was not at all patient.

"Doctor,"—said he, one day, at Boxall Hill—"how about those Greshamsbury title-deeds?"

"Oh, that will all be properly settled between my lawyer and your own!"

"Oh,—ah,—yes; no doubt the lawyers will settle it;—settle it with a fine bill of costs, of course. But, as Finney says,"—Finney was Sir Louis' legal adviser,—"I have got a tremendously large interest at stake in this matter. Eighty thousand pounds is no joke. It ain't everybody that can shell out eighty thousand pounds when they 're wanted; and I should like to

know how the thing 's going on. I 've a right to ask, you know; eh, doctor?"

"The title-deeds of a large portion of the Greshamsbury estate will be placed with the mortgage-deeds before the end of next month."

"Oh, that 's all right! I choose to know about these things; for though my father did make such a con—found—ed will, that 's no reason I should n't know how things are going."

"You shall know everything that I know, Sir Louis."

"And now, doctor, what are we to do about money?"

"About money?"

"Yes; money, rhino, ready! 'put money in your purse, and cut a dash;' eh, doctor? Not that I want to cut a dash. No; I 'm going on the quiet line altogether now; I 've done with all that sort of thing."

"I 'm heartily glad of it; heartily," said the doctor.

"Yes, I'm not going to make way for my far-away cousin yet;—not if I know it, at least. I shall soon be all right now, doctor; shan't I?"

"'All right' is a long word, Sir Louis. But I do hope you will be all right in time, if you will live with decent prudence. You should n't take that filth in the morning though."

"Filth in the morning! That 's my mother, I suppose! That 's her ladyship! She 's been talking, has she? Don't you believe her, doctor. There 's not a young man in Barsetshire is going more regular, all right within the posts, than I am." The doctor was obliged to acknowledge that there did seem to be some improvement. "And now, doctor, how about money? Eh?"

Doctor Thorne, like other guardians similarly circumstanced, began to explain that Sir Louis had already had a good deal of money, and had begun also to promise that more should be forthcoming in the event of good behaviour, when he was somewhat suddenly interrupted by Sir Louis. "Well, now, I 'll tell you what, doctor. I 've got a bit of news for you; something that I think will astonish you." The doctor opened his eyes, and tried to look as though ready to be surprised. "Something that will really make you look about; and something, too, that will be very much to the hearer's advantage,—as the newspaper advertisements say."

"Something to my advantage?" said the doctor.

"Well, I hope you 'll think so. Doctor, what would you think now of my getting married?"

"I should be delighted to hear of it,—more delighted than I can express; that is, of course, if you were to marry well. It was your father's most eager wish that you should marry early."

"That 's partly my reason," said the young hypocrite. "But then, if I marry, I must have an income fit to live on; eh, doctor?"

The doctor had some fear that his interesting protégé was desirous of a wife for the sake of the income, instead of desiring the income for the sake of the wife. But let the cause be what it would, marriage would probably be good for him; and he had no hesitation, therefore, in telling him, that if he married well, he should be put in possession of sufficient income to maintain the new Lady Scatcherd in a manner becoming her dignity.

"As to marrying well," said Sir Louis, "you, I take

it, will be the last man, doctor, to quarrel with my choice."

"Shall I?" said the doctor, smiling.

"Well, you won't disapprove, I guess, as the Yankee says. What would you think of Miss Mary Thorne?"

It must be said in Sir Louis' favour that he had probably no idea whatever of the estimation in which such young ladies as Mary Thorne are held by those who are nearest and dearest to them. He had no sort of conception that she was regarded by her uncle as an inestimable treasure, almost too precious to be rendered up to the arms of any man; and infinitely beyond any price in silver and gold, baronets' incomes of eight or ten thousand a year, and such coins usually current in the world's markets. He was a rich man and a baronet, and Mary was an unmarried girl without a portion. In Sir Louis' estimation he was offering everything, and asking for nothing. He certainly had some idea that girls were apt to be coy, and required a little wooing in the shape of presents, civil speeches,—perhaps kisses also. The civil speeches he had, he thought, done, and imagined that they had been well received. The other things were to follow; an Arab pony, for instance,—and the kisses probably with it; and then all these difficulties would be smoothed.

But he did not for a moment conceive that there would be any difficulty with the uncle. How should there be? Was he not a baronet with ten thousand a year coming to him? Had he not everything which fathers want for portionless daughters, and uncles for dependent nieces? Might he not well inform the

doctor that he had something to tell him for his advantage? And yet, to tell the truth, the doctor did not seem to be overjoyed when the announcement was first made to him. He was by no means overjoyed. On the contrary, even Sir Louis could perceive his guardian's surprise was altogether unmixed with delight.

What a question was this that was asked him! What would he think of a marriage between Mary Thorne,—his Mary, and Sir Louis Scatcherd? Between the alpha of the whole alphabet, and him whom he could not but regard as almost the omega! Think of it! Why, he would think of it as though a lamb and a wolf were to stand at the altar together. Had Sir Louis been a Hottentot, or an Esquimau, the proposal could not have astonished him more. The two persons were so totally of a different class, that the idea of the one falling in love with the other had never occurred to him. "What would you think of Miss Mary Thorne?" Sir Louis had asked; and the doctor, instead of answering him with ready and pleased alacrity, stood silent, thunderstruck with amazement. "Well, would n't she be a good wife?" said Sir Louis, rather in a tone of disgust at the evident disapproval shown at his choice. "I thought you 'd have been delighted."

"Mary Thorne!" ejaculated the doctor at last. "Have you spoken to my niece about this, Sir Louis?"

"Well, I have, and yet I have n't. I have n't, and yet in a manner I have."

"I don't understand you," said the doctor.

"Why, you see, I have n't exactly popped to her

yet; but I have been doing the civil; and if she 's up to snuff, as I take her to be, she knows very well what I 'm after by this time."

Up to snuff! Mary Thorne, his Mary, up to snuff! To snuff too of such a very disagreeable description! "I think, Sir Louis, that you are in mistake about this. I think you will find that Mary will not be disposed to avail herself of the great advantages,—for great they undoubtedly are,—which you are able to offer to your intended wife. If you will take my advice, you will give up thinking of Mary. She would not suit you."

"Not suit me! Oh, but I think she just would! She 's got no money, you mean?"

"No, I did not mean that. It will not signify to you whether your wife has money or not. You need not look for money. But you should think of some one more nearly of your own temperament. I am quite sure that my niece would refuse you."

These last words the doctor uttered with much emphasis. His intention was to make the baronet understand that the matter was quite hopeless, and to induce him if possible to drop it on the spot. But he did not know Sir Louis. He ranked him too low in the scale of human beings, and gave him no credit for any strength of character. Sir Louis in his way did love Mary Thorne; and could not bring himself to believe that Mary did not, or at any rate would not soon return his passion. He was, moreover, sufficiently obstinate, firm we ought perhaps to say,—for his pursuit in this case was certainly not an evil one,—and he at once made up his mind to succeed in spite of the uncle. "If she consents, however, you will do so too?" asked he.

"It is impossible she should consent," said the doctor.

"Impossible! I don't see anything at all impossible. But if she does?"

"But she won't."

"Very well;—that 's to be seen. But just tell me this; if she does, will you consent?"

"The stars would fall first. It 's all nonsense. Give it up, my dear friend; believe me you are only preparing unhappiness for yourself;" and the doctor put his hand kindly on the young man's arm. "She will not, cannot accept such an offer."

"Will not! cannot!" said the baronet, thinking over all the reasons which in his estimation could possibly be inducing the doctor to be so hostile to his views, and shaking the hand off his arm. "Will not! cannot! But come, doctor, answer my question fairly. If she 'll have me for better or worse, you won't say anything against it; will you?"

"But she won't have you. Why should you give her and yourself the pain of a refusal?"

"Oh, as for that, I must stand my chance like another. And as for her, why d——, doctor, you would n't have me believe that any young lady thinks it so very dreadful to have a baronet with ten thousand pounds a year at her feet, specially when that same baronet ain't very old, nor yet particularly ugly. I ain't so green as that, doctor."

"I suppose she must go through it, then," said the doctor, musing.

"But, Dr. Thorne, I did look for a kinder answer from you, considering all that you say so often about your great friendship for my father. I did think you 'd at any rate answer me when I asked you a question!"

But the doctor did not want to answer that special question. Could it be possible that Mary should wish to marry this odious man, could such a state of things be imagined to be the case, he would not refuse his consent, infinitely as he would be disgusted by her choice. But he would not give Sir Louis any excuse for telling Mary that her uncle approved of so odious a match.

"I cannot say that in any case I should approve of such a marriage, Sir Louis. I cannot bring myself to say so; for I know it would make you both miserable. But on that matter my niece will choose wholly for herself."

"And about the money, doctor?"

"If you marry a decent woman you shall not want the means of supporting her decently." So saying the doctor walked away, leaving Sir Louis to his meditations.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DONKEY RIDE.

Sir Louis, when left to himself, was slightly dismayed and somewhat discouraged; but he was not induced to give up his object. The first effort of his mind was made in conjecturing what private motive Dr. Thorne could possibly have in wishing to debar his niece from marrying a rich young baronet. That the objection was personal to himself Sir Louis did not for a moment imagine. Could it be that the doctor did not wish that his niece should be richer, and grander, and altogether bigger than himself? Or was it possible that his guardian was anxious to prevent him from marrying from some view to the reversion of the large fortune? That there was some such reason, Sir Louis was well sure; but let it be what it might, he would get the better of the doctor. "He knew," so he said to himself, "what stuff girls were made of. Baronets did not grow like blackberries." And so, assuring himself with such philosophy, he determined to make his offer.

The time he selected for doing this was the hour before dinner; but on the day on which his conversation with the doctor had taken place, he was deterred by the presence of a strange visitor. To account for this strange visit it will be necessary that we should return to Greshamsbury for a few minutes.

Frank, when he returned home for his summer vacation, found that Mary had again flown; and the very fact of her absence added fuel to the fire of his love, more perhaps than even her presence might have done. For the flight of the quarry ever adds eagerness to the pursuit of the huntsman. Lady Arabella, moreover, had a bitter enemy; a foe, utterly opposed to her side in the contest, where she had once fondly looked for her stanchest ally. Frank was now in the habit of corresponding with Miss Dunstable, and received from her most energetic admonitions to be true to the love which he had sworn. True to it he resolved to be; and therefore, when he found that Mary was flown, he resolved to fly after her.

He did not, however, do this till he had been in a measure provoked to it by the sharp-tongued cautions and blunted irony of his mother. It was not enough for her that she had banished Mary out of the parish, and made Dr. Thorne's life miserable; not enough that she harassed her husband with harangues on the constant subject of Frank's marrying money, and dismayed Beatrice with invectives against the iniquity of her friend. The snake was so but scotched. To kill it outright she must induce Frank utterly to renounce Miss Thorne.

This task she essayed, but not exactly with success. "Well, mother," said Frank at last, turning very red, partly with shame, and partly with indignation, as he made the frank avowal, "since you will press me about it, I tell you fairly that my mind is made up to marry Mary sooner or later."

"Oh, Frank! good heavens! you wicked boy; you are saying this purposely to drive me distracted."

"If," continued Frank, not attending to his mother's interjections,—"if she will consent."

"Consent!" said Lady Arabella. "Oh, heavens!" and falling into the corner of the sofa she buried her face in her handkerchief.

"Yes, mother, if she will consent. And now that I have told you so much, it is only just that I should tell you this also;—that as far as I can see at present I have no reason to hope that she will do so."

"Oh, Frank, the girl is doing all she can to catch you!" said Lady Arabella—not prudently.

"No, mother; there you wrong her altogether: wrong her most cruelly."

"You ungracious, wicked boy! You call me cruel!"

"I don't call you cruel; but you do wrong her cruelly, most cruelly. When I have spoken to her about this,—for I have spoken to her,—she has behaved exactly as you would have wished her to do; but not at all as I wished her. She has given me no encouragement. You have turned her out among you!"—Frank was beginning to be very bitter now. "But she has done nothing to deserve it. If there has been any fault it has been mine. But it is well that we should all understand each other. My intention is to marry Mary if I can." And, so speaking, certainly without due filial respect, he turned towards the door.

"Frank," said his mother, raising herself up with energy to make one last appeal. "Frank, do you wish to see me die of a broken heart?"

"You know, mother, I would wish to make you happy, if I could."

"If you wish to see me ever happy again, if you do

not wish to see me sink broken-hearted to my grave, you must give up this mad idea. Frank,"—and now all Lady Arabella's energy came out,—"Frank, there is but one course left open to you. You MUST MARRY MONEY." And then Lady Arabella stood up before her son as Lady Macbeth might have stood had Lady Macbeth lived to have a son of Frank's years.

"Miss Dunstable, I suppose," said Frank, scornfully. "No, mother; I made an ass, and worse than an ass of myself once in that way, and I won't do it again. I hate money."

"Oh, Frank!"

"I hate money."

"But, Frank, the estate?"

"I hate the estate;—at least I shall hate it if I am expected to buy it at such a price as that. The estate is my father's."

"Oh, no, Frank; it is not."

"It is in the sense I mean. He may do with it as he pleases. He will never have a word of complaint from me. I am ready to go into a profession to-morrow. I 'll be a lawyer, or a doctor, or an engineer; I don't care what." Frank, in his enthusiasm, probably overlooked some of the preliminary difficulties. "Or I 'll take a farm under him, and earn my bread that way. But, mother, don't talk to me any more about marrying money." And, so saying, Frank left the room.

Frank, it will be remembered, was twenty-one when he was first introduced to the reader. He is now twenty-two. It may be said that there was a great difference between his character then and now. A year at that period will make a great difference; but

the change has been, not in his character, but in his feelings.

Frank went out from his mother, and immediately ordered his black horse to be got ready for him. He would at once go over to Boxall Hill. He went himself to the stables to give his orders, and as he returned to get his gloves and whip he met Beatrice in the corridor.

"Beatrice," said he, "step in here," and she followed him into his room. "I 'm not going to bear this any longer. I 'm going to Boxall Hill."

"Oh, Frank! how can you be so imprudent?"

"You, at any rate, have some decent feeling for Mary. I believe you have some regard for her; and therefore I tell you. Will you send her any message?"

"Oh, yes; my best, best love; that is, if you will see her; but, Frank, you are very foolish, very; and she will be infinitely distressed."

"Do not mention this; that is, not at present; not that I mean to make any secret of it. I shall tell my father everything. I 'm off now!" and then, paying no attention to her remonstrance, he turned down the stairs and was soon on horseback.

He took the road to Boxall Hill, but he did not ride very fast; he did not go jauntily as a jolly, thriving wooer; but musingly, and often with diffidence, meditating every now and then whether it would not be better for him to turn back,—to turn back;—but not from fear of his mother; not from prudential motives; not because that often-repeated lesson as to marrying money was beginning to take effect; not from such causes as these;—but because he doubted how he might be received by Mary.

He did, it is true, think something about his worldly prospects. He had talked rather grandiloquently to his mother as to his hating money, and hating the estate. His mother's never-ceasing worldly cares on such subjects perhaps demanded that a little grandiloquence should be opposed to them. But Frank did not hate the estate; nor did he at all hate the position of an English country gentleman. Miss Dunstable's eloquence, however, rang in his ears. For Miss Dunstable had an eloquence of her own, even in her letters. "Never let them talk you out of your own true, honest, hearty feelings," she had said. "Greshamsbury is a very nice place, I am sure; and I hope I shall see it some day; but all its green knolls are not half so nice, should not be half so precious, as the pulses of your own heart. That is your own estate, your own, your very own,—your own and another's. Whatever may go to the money-lenders, don't send that there. Don't mortgage that, Mr. Gresham."

"No," said Frank, pluckily, as he put his horse into a faster trot; "I won't mortgage that. They may do what they like with the estate; but my heart 's my own," and so speaking to himself, almost aloud, he turned a corner of the road rapidly and came at once upon the doctor.

"Hallo, doctor! is that you?" said Frank, rather disgusted.

"What! Frank! I hardly expected to meet you here," said Dr. Thorne, not much better pleased.

They were now not above a mile from Boxall Hill, and the doctor, therefore, could not but surmise whither Frank was going. They had repeatedly met since Frank's return from Cambridge, both in the vil-

lage and in the doctor's house; but not a word had been said between them about Mary beyond what the merest courtesy had required. Not that each did not love the other sufficiently to make a full confidence between them desirable to both; but neither had the courage to speak out.

Nor had either of them the courage to do so now. "Yes," said Frank, blushing, "I am going to Lady Scatcherd's. Shall I find the ladies at home?"

"Yes; Lady Scatcherd is there; but Sir Louis is there also;—an invalid. Perhaps you would not wish to meet him."

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Frank, trying to laugh; "he won't bite, I suppose?"

The doctor longed in his heart to pray Frank to return with him; not to go and make further mischief; not to do that which might cause a more bitter estrangement between himself and the squire. But he had not the courage to do it. He could not bring himself to accuse Frank of being in love with his niece. So after a few more senseless words on either side, words which each knew to be senseless as he uttered them, they both rode on their own ways.

And then the doctor, silently, and almost unconsciously, made such a comparison between Louis Scatcherd and Frank Gresham as Hamlet made between the dead and live king. It was Hyperion to a satyr. Was it not as impossible that Mary should not love the one, as that she should love the other? Frank's offer of his affections had at first probably been but a boyish ebullition of feeling; but if it should now be that this had grown into a manly and disinterested love, how could Mary remained unmoved? What

could her heart want more, better, more beautiful, more rich than such a love as his? Was he not personally all that a girl could like? Were not his disposition, mind, character, acquirements, all such as women most delight to love? Was it not impossible that Mary should be indifferent to him?

So meditated the doctor as he rode along, with only too true a knowledge of human nature. Ah, it was impossible, it was quite impossible that Mary should be indifferent! She had never been indifferent since Frank had uttered his first half-joking word of love. Such things are more important to women than they are to men, to girls than they are to boys. When Frank had first told her that he loved her, nay, months before that, when he merely looked his love, her heart had received the whisper, had acknowledged the glance, unconscious as she was herself, and resolved as she was to rebuke his advances. When, in her hearing, he had said soft nothings to Patience Oriel, a hated, irrepressible tear had gathered in her eye. When he had pressed in his warm, loving grasp the hand which she had offered him as a token of mere friendship, her heart had forgiven him the treachery, nay, almost thanked him for it, before her eyes or her words had been ready to rebuke him. When the rumour of his liaison with Miss Dunstable reached her ears, when she heard of Miss Dunstable's fortune, she had wept, wept outright, in her chamber,—wept, as she said to herself, to think that he should be so mercenary; but she had wept, as she should have said to herself, at finding that he was so faithless. Then, when she knew at last that this rumour was false, when she found that she was banished from Greshams-

bury for his sake, when she was forced to retreat with her friend Patience, how could she but love him, in that he was not mercenary? How could she not love him in that he was so faithful?

It was impossible that she should not love him. Was he not the brightest and the best of men that she had ever seen, or was like to see?—that she could possibly ever see, she would have said to herself could she have brought herself to own the truth? And then, when she heard how true he was, how he persisted against father, mother, and sisters, how could it be that that should not be a merit in her eyes which was so great a fault in theirs? When Beatrice, with would-be solemn face, but with eyes beaming with feminine affection, would gravely talk of Frank's tender love as a terrible misfortune, as a misfortune to them all, to Mary herself as well as others, how could Mary do other than love him? "Beatrice is his sister," she would say within her own mind, "otherwise she would never talk like this. Were she not his sister she could not but know the value of such love as this." Ah, yes! Mary did love him; love him with all the strength of her heart; and the strength of her heart was very great. And now by degrees, in those lonely donkey rides at Boxall Hill, in those solitary walks, she was beginning to own to herself the truth.

And now that she did own it, what should be her course? What should she do, how should she act if this loved one persevered in his love? And, ah! what should she do, how should she act if he did not persevere? Could it be that there should be happiness in store for her? Was it not too clear that, let the matter go how it would, there was no happiness in store

for her? Much as she might love Frank Gresham, she could never consent to be his wife unless the squire would smile on her as his daughter-in-law. The squire had been all that was kind, all that was affectionate. And then, too, Lady Arabella! As she thought of the Lady Arabella a sterner form of thought came across her brow. Why should Lady Arabella rob her of her heart's joy? What was Lady Arabella that she, Mary Thorne, need quail before her? Had Lady Arabella stood only in her way, Lady Arabella, flanked by the De Courcy legion, Mary felt that she could have demanded Frank's hand as her own before them all without a blush of shame or a moment's hesitation. Thus, when her heart was all but ready to collapse within her, would she gain some little strength by thinking of the Lady Arabella.

"Please, my lady, here be the young squoire Gresham," said one of the untutored servants at Boxall Hill, opening Lady Scatcherd's little parlour door as her ladyship was amusing herself by pulling down and turning, and refolding, and putting up again, a heap of household linen which was kept in a huge press for the express purpose of supplying her with occupation. Lady Scatcherd, holding a vast counterpane in her arms, looked back over her shoulders and perceived that Frank was in the room. Down went the counterpane on the ground, and Frank soon found himself in the very position which that useful article had so lately filled.

"Oh, Master Frank! oh, Master Frank!" said her ladyship, almost in an hysterical fit of joy; and then she hugged and kissed him as she had never kissed and hugged her own son since that son had first left the parent-nest.

Frank bore it patiently and with a merry laugh. "But, Lady Scatcherd," said he, "what will they all say? You forget I am a man now," and he stooped his head as she again pressed her lips upon his forehead.

"I don't care what none of 'em say," said her ladyship, quite going back to her old days; "I will kiss my own boy; so I will. Eh, but Master Frank, this is good of you. A sight of you is good for sore eyes; and my eyes have been sore enough too since I saw you;" and she put her apron up to wipe away a tear.

"Yes," said Frank, gently trying to disengage himself, but not successfully; "yes, you have had a great loss, Lady Scatcherd. I was so sorry when I heard of your grief."

"You always had a soft, kind heart, Master Frank; so you had, God's blessing on you! What a fine man you have grown! Deary me! Well, it seems as though it were only just t'other day like." And she pushed him a little off from her, so that she might look the better into his face.

"Well, is it all right? I suppose you would hardly know me again now I 've got a pair of whiskers?"

"Know you! I should know you well if I saw but the heel of your foot. Why, what a head of hair you have got, and so dark too! But it does n't curl as it used once." And she stroked his hair, and looked into his eyes, and put her hand to his cheeks. "You 'll think me an old fool, Master Frank; I know that; but you may think what you like. If I live for the next twenty years you 'll always be my own boy; so you will."

By degrees, slow degrees, Frank managed to change the conversation, and to induce Lady Scatcherd to speak on some topic other than his own infantile perfections. He affected an indifference as he spoke of her guest, which would have deceived no one but Lady Scatcherd; but her it did deceive; and then he asked where Mary was.

"She 's just out on her donkey;—somewhere about the place. She rides on a donkey mostly every day. But you 'll stop and take a bit of dinner with us? Eh, now, do'ee, Master Frank!"

But Master Frank excused himself. He did not choose to pledge himself to sit down to dinner with Mary. He did not know in what mood they might return with regard to each other at dinner-time. He said, therefore, that he would walk out and, if possible, find Miss Thorne; and that he would return to the house again before he went.

Lady Scatcherd then began making apologies for Sir Louis. He was an invalid. The doctor had been with him all the morning, and he was not yet out of his room. These apologies Frank willingly accepted, and then made his way as he could on to the lawn. A gardener, of whom he inquired, offered to go with him in pursuit of Miss Thorne. This assistance, however, he declined, and set forth in quest of her, having learnt what were her most usual haunts. Nor was he directed wrongly; for after walking about twenty minutes, he saw through the trees the legs of a donkey moving on the greensward, at about two hundred yards from him. On that donkey doubtless sat Mary Thorne.

The donkey was coming towards him; not exactly

in a straight line, but so much so as to make it impossible that Mary should not see him if he stood still. He did stand still, and soon emerging from the trees, Mary saw him all but close to her.

Her heart gave a leap within her, but she was so far mistress of herself as to repress any very visible sign of outward emotion. She did not fall from her donkey, or scream, or burst into tears. She merely uttered the words, "Mr. Gresham!" in a tone of not unnatural surprise.

"Yes," said he, trying to laugh, but less successful than she had been in suppressing a show of feeling, "Mr. Gresham! I have come over at last to pay my respects to you. You must have thought me very uncourteous not to do so before."

This she denied. "She had not," she said, "thought him at all uncivil. She had come to Boxall Hill to be out of the way; and, of course, had not expected any such formalities." As she uttered this she almost blushed at the abrupt truth of what she was saying. But she was taken so much unawares that she did not know how to make the truth other than abrupt.

"To be out of the way!" said Frank. "And why should you want to be out of the way?"

"Oh, there were reasons!" said she, laughing. "Perhaps I have quarrelled dreadfully with my uncle." Frank at the present moment had not about him a scrap of badinage. He had not a single easy word at his command. He could not answer her with anything in the guise of a joke; so he walked on, not answering at all. "I hope all my friends at Greshamsbury are well," said Mary. "Is Beatrice quite well?"

"Quite well," said he.

"And Patience?"

"What, Miss Oriel; yes, I believe so. I have n't seen her this day or two." How was it that Mary felt a little flush of joy as Frank spoke in this indifferent way about Miss Oriel's health?

"I thought she was always a particular friend of yours," said she.

"What! who? Miss Oriel? So she is! I like her amazingly. So does Beatrice." And then he walked about six steps in silence, plucking up courage for the great attempt. He did pluck up his courage and then rushed at once to the attack. "Mary!" said he, and as he spoke he put his hand on the donkey's neck and looked tenderly into her face. He looked tenderly, and, as Mary's ear at once told her, his voice sounded more soft than it had ever sounded before. "Mary, do you remember the last time that we were together?"

Mary did remember it well. It was on that occasion when he had treacherously held her hand; on that day when, according to law, he had become a man; when he had outraged all the propriety of the De Courcy interest by offering his love to Mary in Augusta's hearing. Mary did remember it well. But how was she to speak of it? "It was your birthday, I think," said she.

"Yes. It was my birthday. I wonder whether you remember what I said to you then?"

"I remember that you were very foolish, Mr. Gresham."

"Mary, I have come to repeat my folly;—that is, if it be folly. I told you then that I loved you, and

I dare say that I did so awkwardly, like a boy. Perhaps I may be just as awkward now; but you ought at any rate to believe me, when you find that a year has not altered me."

Mary did not think him at all awkward, and she did believe him. But how was she to answer him? She had not yet taught herself what answer she ought to make if he persisted in his suit. She had hitherto been content to run away from him; but she had done so because she would not submit to be accused of the indelicacy of putting herself in his way. She had rebuked him when he first spoke of his love; but she had done so because she looked on what he said as a boy's nonsense. She had schooled herself in obedience to the Greshamsbury doctrines. Was there any real reason, any reason founded on truth and honesty, why she should not be a fitting wife to Frank Gresham,—Francis Newbold Gresham, of Greshamsbury, though he was, or was to be?

He was well born,—as well born as any gentleman in England. She was basely born,—as basely born as any lady could be. Was this sufficient bar against such a match? Mary felt in her heart that some twelvemonth since, before she knew what little she did now know of her own story, she would have said it was so. And would she indulge her own love by inveigling him she loved into a base marriage? But then reason spoke again. What, after all was this blood of which she had taught herself to think so much? Would she have been more honest, more fit to grace an honest man's hearthstone, had she been the legitimate descendant of a score of legitimate duchesses? Was it not her first duty to think of him,

—of what would make him happy? Then of her uncle,—what he would approve? Then of herself,—what would best become her modesty; her sense of honour? Could it be well that she should sacrifice the happiness of two persons to a theoretic love of pure blood?

So she had argued within herself; not now, sitting on the donkey, with Frank's hand before her on the tame brute's neck; but on other former occasions as she had ridden along demurely among those trees. So she had argued; but she had never brought her arguments to a decision. All manner of thoughts crowded on her to prevent her doing so. She would think of the squire, and resolve to reject Frank; and would then remember Lady Arabella, and resolve to accept him. Her resolutions, however, were most irresolute; and so, when Frank appeared in person before her, carrying his heart in his hand, she did not know what answer to make to him. Thus it was with her as with so many other maidens similarly circumstanced;—at last she left it all to chance.

"You ought, at any rate, to believe me," said Frank, "when you find that a year has not altered me."

"A year should have taught you to be wiser," said she. "You should have learnt by this time, Mr. Gresham, that your lot and mine are not cast in the same mould;—that our stations in life are different. Would your father or mother approve of your even coming here to see me?"

Mary, as she spoke these sensible words, felt that they were "flat, stale, and unprofitable." She felt also that they were not true in sense; that they did not come from her heart; that they were not such as

Frank deserved at her hands, and she was ashamed of herself.

"My father, I hope, will approve of it," said he. "That my mother should disapprove of it is a misfortune which I cannot help. But on this point I will take no answer from my father or mother; the question is one too personal to myself. Mary, if you say that you will not, or cannot return my love, I will go away;—not from here only, but from Greshamsbury. My presence shall not banish you from all you hold dear. If you can honestly say that I am nothing to you, can be nothing to you, I will then tell my mother that she may be at ease, and I will go away somewhere and get over it as I may." The poor fellow got so far, looking apparently at the donkey's ears, with hardly a gasp of hope in his voice, and he so far carried Mary with him that she also had hardly a gasp of hope in her heart. There he paused for a moment, and then looking up into her face, he spoke but one word more. "But," said he—and there he stopped. It was all clearly told in that "but." Thus would he do if Mary would declare that she did not care for him. If, however, she could not bring herself so to declare, then was he ready to throw his father and mother to the winds; then would he stand his ground; then would he look all other difficulties in the face, sure that they might finally be overcome. Poor Mary! The whole onus of settling the matter was thus thrown upon her. She had only to say that he was indifferent to her;—that was all.

If "all the blood of all the Howards" had depended upon it, she could not have brought herself to utter such a falsehood. Indifferent to her, as he walked

there by her donkey's side, talking thus earnestly of his love for her! Was he not to her like some god come from the heavens to make her blessed? Did not the sun shine upon him with a halo, so that he was bright as an angel? Indifferent to her! Could the open unadulterated truth have been practicable for her, she would have declared her indifference in terms that would truly have astonished him. As it was, she found it easier to say nothing. She bit her lips to keep herself from sobbing. She struggled hard, but in vain, to prevent her hands and feet from trembling. She seemed to swing upon her donkey as though like to fall, and would have given much to be upon her own feet upon the sward.

"Si la jeunesse savait. . . ." There is so much in that wicked old French proverb! Had Frank known more about a woman's mind,—had he, that is, been forty-two instead of twenty-two,—he would at once have been sure of his game, and have felt that Mary's silence told him all he wished to know. But then, had he been forty-two instead of twenty-two, he would not have been so ready to risk the acres of Greshamsbury for the smiles of Mary Thorne.

"If you can't say one word to comfort me, I will go," said he, disconsolately. "I made up my mind to tell you this, and so I came over. I told Lady Scatcherd I should not stay,—not even for dinner."

"I did not know that you were so hurried," said she, almost in a whisper.

On a sudden he stood still, and pulling the donkey's rein, caused him to stand still also. The beast required very little persuasion to be so guided, and obligingly remained meekly passive. "Mary, Mary!"

said Frank, throwing his arms round her knees as she sat upon her steed, and pressing his face against her body. "Mary, you were always honest. Be honest now. I love you with all my heart. Will you be my wife?"

But still Mary said not a word. She no longer bit her lips; she was beyond that, and was now using all her efforts to prevent her tears from falling absolutely on her lover's face. She said nothing. She could no more rebuke him now and send him from her than she could encourage him. She could only sit there shaking and crying and wishing she was on the ground. Frank on the whole rather liked the donkey. It enabled him to approach somewhat nearer to an embrace than he might have found practicable had they both been on their feet. The donkey himself was quite at his ease, and looked as though he was approvingly conscious of what was going on behind his ears.

"I have a right to a word, Mary; say 'Go,' and I will leave you at once."

But Mary did not say "Go." Perhaps she would have done so had she been able; but just at present she could say nothing. This came from her having failed to make up her mind in due time as to what course it would best become her to follow.

"One word, Mary; one little word. There; if you will not speak, there is my hand. If you will have it, let it lie in yours;—if not, push it away." So saying, he managed to get the end of his fingers on to her palm, and there it remained unrepulsed. "La jeunesse" was beginning to get a lesson. Experience when duly sought after sometimes comes early in life.

In truth, Mary had not strength to push the fingers

away. "My love, my own, my own!" said Frank, presuming on this very negative sign of acquiescence. "My life, my own one, my own Mary!" and then the hand was caught hold of and was at his lips before an effort could be made to save it from such treatment.

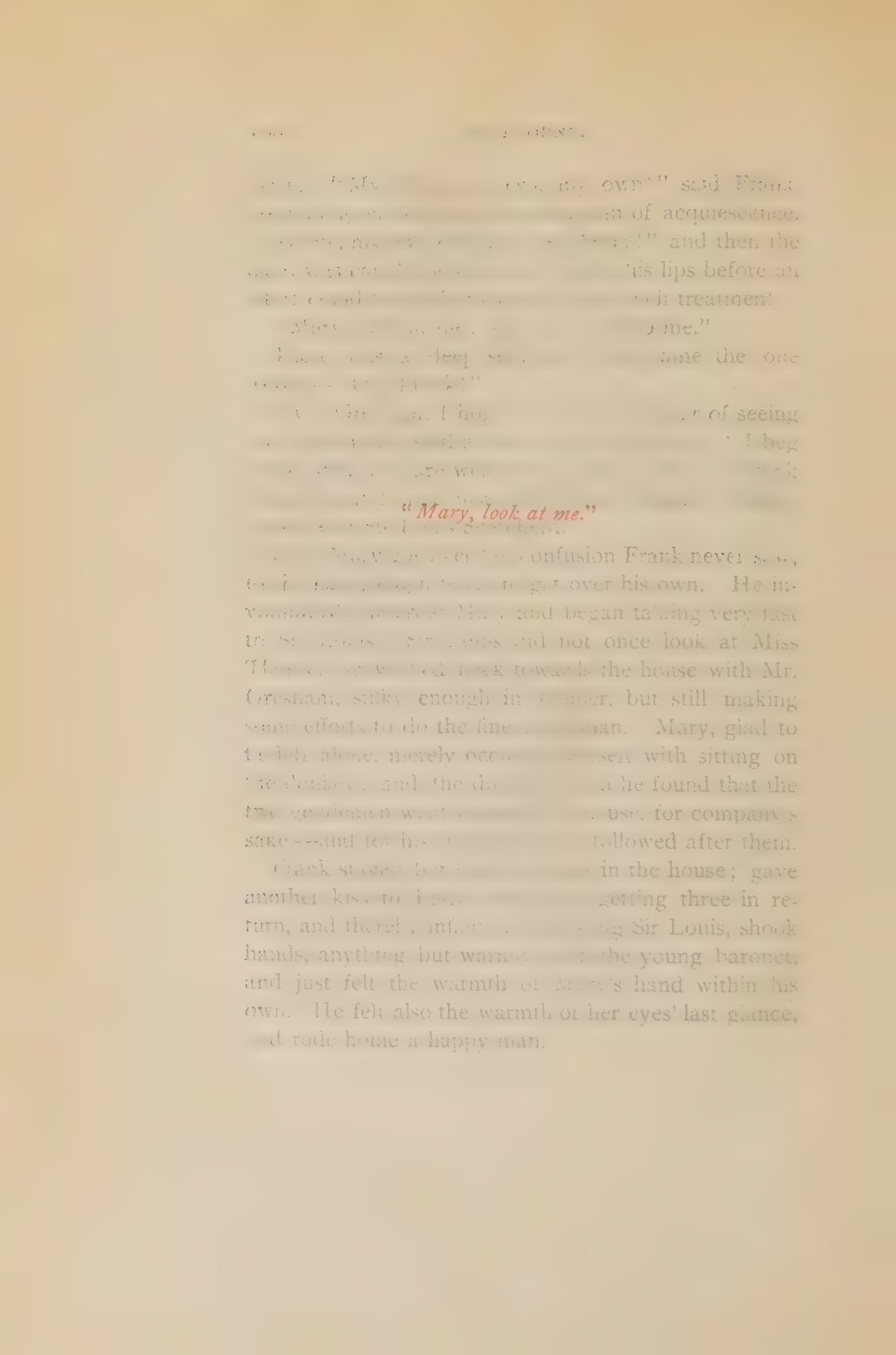
"Mary, look at me; say one word to me."

There was a deep sigh and then came the one word;—"Oh, Frank!"

"Mr. Gresham, I hope I have the honour of seeing you quite well," said a voice close to his ear. "I beg to say that you are welcome to Boxall Hill." Frank turned round and instantly found himself shaking hands with Sir Louis Scatcherd.

How Mary got over her confusion Frank never saw, for he had enough to do to get over his own. He involuntarily deserted Mary and began talking very fast to Sir Louis. Sir Louis did not once look at Miss Thorne, but walked back towards the house with Mr. Gresham, sulky enough in temper, but still making some efforts to do the fine gentleman. Mary, glad to be left alone, merely occupied herself with sitting on the donkey; and the donkey, when he found that the two gentlemen went towards the house, for company's sake,—and for his stable's sake,—followed after them.

Frank stayed but three minutes in the house; gave another kiss to Lady Scatcherd, getting three in return, and thereby infinitely disgusting Sir Louis, shook hands, anything but warmly, with the young baronet, and just felt the warmth of Mary's hand within his own. He felt also the warmth of her eyes' last glance, and rode home a happy man.



"Mary, look at me."

CHAPTER VII.

POST PRANDIAL.

Frank rode home a happy man, cheering himself, as successful lovers do cheer themselves, with the brilliancy of his late exploit. Nor was it till he had turned the corner into the Greshamsbury stables that he began to reflect what he would do next. It was all very well to have induced Mary to allow his three fingers to lie half a minute in her soft hand; the having done so might certainly be sufficient evidence that he had overcome one of the lions in his path; but it could hardly be said that all his difficulties were now smoothed. How was he to make further progress?

To Mary, also, the same ideas no doubt occurred, with many others. But then it was not for Mary to make any progress in the matter. To her at least belonged this passive comfort, that at present no act hostile to the De Courcy interest would be expected from her. All that she could do would be to tell her uncle so much as it was fitting that he should know. The doing this would doubtless be in some degree difficult; but it was not probable that there would be much difference, much of anything but loving anxiety for each other, between her and Dr. Thorne. One other thing, indeed, she must do. Frank must be made to understand what her birth had been. "This," she said to herself, "will give him an opportunity of retract-

ing what he has done should he choose to avail himself of it. It is well he should have such opportunity."

But Frank had more than this to do. He had told Beatrice that he would make no secret of his love, and he fully resolved to be as good as his word. To his father he owed an unreserved confidence; and he was fully minded to give it. It was, he knew, altogether out of the question that he should at once marry a portionless girl without his father's consent; probably out of the question that he should do so even with it. But he would, at any rate, tell his father, and then decide as to what should be done next. So resolving, he put his black horse into the stable and went in to dinner. After dinner he and his father would be alone.

Yes; after dinner he and his father would be alone. He dressed himself hurriedly, for the dinner-bell was almost on the stroke as he entered the house. He said this to himself once and again; but when the meats, and the puddings, and then the cheese, were borne away, —as the decanters were placed before his father, and Lady Arabella sipped her one glass of claret, and his sisters ate their portion of strawberries—his pressing anxiety for the coming interview began to wax somewhat dull.

His mother and sisters, however, rendered him no assistance by prolonging their stay. With unwonted assiduity he pressed a second glass of claret on his mother. But Lady Arabella was not only temperate in her habits, but also at the present moment very angry with her son. She thought that he had been to Boxall Hill, and was only waiting a proper moment to cross-question him sternly on the subject. Now she departed, taking her train of daughters with her.

"Give me one big gooseberry," said Nina, as she squeezed herself in under her brother's arm, prior to making her retreat. Frank would willingly have given her a dozen of the biggest, had she wanted them; but having got the one, she squeezed herself out again and scampered off.

The squire was very cheery this evening; from what cause cannot now be said. Perhaps he had succeeded in negotiating a further loan, thus temporarily sprinkling a drop of water over the ever-rising dust of his difficulties. "Well, Frank, what have you been after to-day? Peter told me you had the black horse out," said he, pushing the decanter to his son. "Take my advice, my boy, and don't give him too much summer road-work. Legs won't stand it, let them be ever so good."

"Why, sir, I was obliged to go out to-day, and therefore it had to be either the old mare or the young horse."

"Why did n't you take Ramble?" Now Ramble was the squire's own saddle-hack, used for farm-surveying, and occasionally for going to cover.

"I should n't think of doing that, sir."

"My dear boy, he is quite at your service; for goodness' sake do let me have a little wine, Frank;—quite at your service; any riding I have now is after the haymakers, and that 's all on the grass."

"Thank'ee, sir. Well, perhaps I will take a turn out of Ramble should I want it."

"Do, and pray, pray take care of that black horse's legs. He 's turning out more of a horse than I took him to be, and I should be sorry to see him injured. Where have you been to-day?"

"Well, father, I have something to tell you."

"Something to tell me!" and then the squire's happy and gay look, which had been only rendered more happy and more gay by his assumed anxiety about the black horse, gave place to that heaviness of visage which acrimony and misfortune had made so habitual to him. "Something to tell me!" Any grave words like these always presaged some money difficulty to the squire's ears. He loved Frank with the tenderest love. He would have done so under almost any circumstances; but, doubtless, that love had been made more palpable to himself by the fact that Frank had been a good son as regards money,—not exigeant as was Lady Arabella, or selfishly reckless as was his nephew, Lord Porlock. But now Frank must be in difficulty about money. This was his first idea. "What is it, Frank? You have seldom had anything to say that has not been pleasant for me to hear." And then the heaviness of visage again gave way for a moment as his eye fell upon his son.

"I have been to Boxall Hill, sir."

The tenor of the father's thoughts was changed in an instant; and the dread of immediate temporary annoyance gave place to true anxiety for his son. He, the squire, had been no party to Mary's exile from his own domain; and he had seen with pain that she had now a second time been driven from her home. But he had never hitherto questioned the expediency of separating his son from Mary Thorne. Alas! it became too necessary,—too necessary through his own default,—that Frank should marry money!

"At Boxall Hill, Frank! Has that been prudent? Or, indeed, has it been generous to Miss Thorne, who

has been driven there, as it were, by your imprudence?"

"Father, it is well that we should understand each other about this."

"Fill your glass, Frank." Frank mechanically did as he was bid, and passed the bottle.

"I should never forgive myself were I to deceive you, or keep anything from you."

"I believe it is not in your nature to deceive me, Frank."

"The fact is, sir, that I have made up my mind that Mary Thorne shall be my wife—sooner or later, that is, unless, of course, she should utterly refuse. Hitherto she has utterly refused me. I believe I may now say that she has accepted me."

The squire sipped his claret, but at the moment said nothing. There was a quiet, manly, but yet modest determination about his son that he had hardly noticed before. Frank had become legally of age, legally a man, when he was twenty-one. Nature, it seems, had postponed the ceremony till he was twenty-two. Nature often does postpone the ceremony even to a much later age;—sometimes altogether forgets to accomplish it.

The squire continued to sip his claret; he had to think over the matter for a while before he could answer a statement so deliberately made by his son.

"I think I may say so," continued Frank, with perhaps unnecessary modesty. "She is so honest that, had she not intended it, she would have said so honestly. Am I right, father, in thinking that, as regards Mary, personally, you would not object to her as a daughter-in-law?"

"Personally!" said the squire, glad to have the subject presented to him in a view that enabled him to speak out. "Oh, no; personally, I should not object to her, for I love her dearly. She is a good girl, I do believe she is a good girl in every respect. I have always liked her; liked to see her about the house. But——"

"I know what you would say, father." This was rather more than the squire knew himself. "Such a marriage is imprudent."

"It is more than that, Frank. I fear it is impossible."

"Impossible! No, father; it is not impossible."

"It is impossible, Frank, in the usual sense. What are you to live upon? What would you do with your children? You would not wish to see your wife distressed and comfortless."

"No, I should not like to see that."

"You would not wish to begin life as an embarrassed man and end it as a ruined man. If you were now to marry Miss Thorne, such would, I fear, doubtless be your lot."

Frank caught at the word "now." "I don't expect to marry immediately. I know that would be imprudent. But I am pledged, father, and I certainly cannot go back. And now that I have told you all this, what is your advice to me?"

The father again sat silent, sipping his wine. There was nothing in his son that he could be ashamed of, nothing that he could meet with anger, nothing that he could not love; but how should he answer him? The fact was, that the son had more in him than the father; that his mind and spirit were of a calibre not to be opposed successfully by the mind and spirit of

the squire. "Do you know Mary's history?" said Mr. Gresham, at last;—"the history of her birth?"

"Not a word of it," said Frank. "I did not know she had a history."

"Nor does she know it; at least, I presume not. But you should know it now. And, Frank, I will tell it you; not to turn you from her,—not with that object, though I think that, to a certain extent, it should have that effect. Mary's birth was not such as would become your wife and be beneficial to your children."

"If so, father, I should have known that sooner. Why was she brought in here among us?"

"True, Frank. The fault is mine;—mine and your mother's. Circumstances brought it about years ago, when it never occurred to us that all this would arise. But I will tell you her history. And, Frank, remember this, though I tell it you as a secret, a secret to be kept from all the world but one, you are quite at liberty to let the doctor know that I have told it you. Indeed, I shall be careful to let him know so myself should it ever be necessary that he and I should speak together as to this engagement." The squire then told his son the whole story of Mary's birth, as it is known to the reader.

Frank sat silent, looking very blank. He also had, as had every Gresham, a great love for his pure blood. He had said to his mother that he hated money, that he hated the estate; but he would have been very slow to say, even in his warmest opposition to her, that he hated the roll of the family pedigree. He loved it dearly, though he seldom spoke of it;—as men of good family seldom do speak of it. It is one of those possessions which to have is sufficient. A man having it

need not boast of what he has, or show it off before the world. But on that account he values it the more. He had regarded Mary as a cutting duly taken from the Ullathorne tree; not, indeed, as a grafting branch, full of flower, just separated from the parent stalk, but as being not a whit the less truly endowed with the pure sap of that venerable trunk. When, therefore, he heard her true history he sat awhile dismayed.

"It is a sad story," said the father.

"Yes, sad enough," said Frank, rising from his chair and standing with it before him, leaning on the back of it. "Poor Mary, poor Mary! She will have to learn it some day."

"I fear so, Frank;" and then there was again a few moments' silence.

"To me, father, it is told too late. It can now have no effect on me. Indeed," said he, sighing as he spoke, but still relieving himself by the very sigh, "it could have had no effect had I heard it ever so soon."

"I should have told you before," said the father. "Certainly I ought to have done so."

"It would have done no good," said Frank. "Ah, sir, tell me this. Who were Miss Dunstable's parents? What was that fellow Moffat's family?"

This was perhaps cruel of Frank. The squire, however, made no answer to the question. "I have thought it right to tell you," said he. "I leave all commentary to yourself. I need not tell you what your mother will think."

"What did she think of Miss Dunstable's birth?" said he, again, more bitterly than before. "No, sir," he continued, after a further pause. "All that can

make no change; none at any rate now. It can't make my love less, even if it could have prevented it. Nor, even, could it do so,—which it can't the least, not in the least,—but could it do so, it could not break my engagement. I am now engaged to Mary Thorne."

And then he again repeated his question, asking for his father's advice under the present circumstances. The conversation was a very long one,—so long as to disarrange all Lady Arabella's plans. She had determined to take her son most stringently to task that very evening; and with this object had ensconced herself in the small drawing-room which had formerly been used for a similar purpose by the august countess herself. Here she now sat, having desired Augusta and Beatrice, as well as the twins, to beg Frank to go to her as soon as he should come out of the dining-room. Poor lady! there she waited till ten o'clock,—tealess. There was not much of the Bluebeard about the squire, but he had succeeded in making it understood through the household that he was not to be interrupted by messages from his wife during the post-prandial hour, which, though no toper, he loved so well.

As a period of twelve months will now be passed over, the upshot of this long conversation must be told in as few words as possible. The father found it impracticable to talk his son out of his intended marriage. Indeed, he hardly attempted to do so by any direct persuasion. He explained to him that it was impossible that he should marry at once, and suggested that he, Frank, was very young.

"You married, sir, before you were one-and-twenty," said Frank. Yes, and repented before I was two-and-twenty! So did NOT SAY the squire. He suggested

that Mary should have time to ascertain what would be her uncle's wishes, and ended by inducing Frank to promise, that after taking his degree in October he would go abroad for some months, and that he would not indeed return to Greshamsbury till he was three-and-twenty.

"He may perhaps forget her," said the father to himself, as this agreement was made between them.

"He thinks that I shall forget her," said Frank to himself at the same time; "but he does not know me."

When Lady Arabella at last got hold of her son she found that the time for her preaching was utterly gone by. He told her, almost with sang-froid, what his plans were; and when she came to understand them, and to understand also what had taken place at Boxall Hill, she could not blame the squire for what he had done. She also said to herself, more confidently than the squire had done, that Frank would quite forget Mary before the year was out. "Lord Buckish," said she to herself, rejoicingly, "is now with the ambassador at Paris" —Lord Buckish was her nephew—"and with him Frank will meet women that are really beautiful,—women of fashion. When with Lord Buckish he will soon forget Mary Thorne."

But not on this account did she change her resolve to follow up to the furthest point her hostility to the Thornes. She was fully enabled now to do so, for Dr. Fillgrave was already reinstalled at Greshamsbury as her medical adviser.

One other short visit did Frank pay to Boxall Hill, and one interview had he with Dr. Thorne. Mary told him all she knew of her own sad history, and was answered only by a kiss,—a kiss absolutely not in any

way by her to be avoided;—the first, the only one, that had ever yet reached her lips from his. And then he went away.

The doctor told him all the story. "Yes," said Frank, "I knew it all before. Dear Mary, dearest Mary! Don't you, doctor, teach yourself to believe that I shall forget her." And then also he went his way from him,—went his way also from Greshamsbury, and was absent for the full period of his allotted banishment,—twelve months, namely, and a day.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SMALL END OF THE WEDGE.

Frank Gresham was absent from Greshamsbury twelve months and a day. A day is always added to the period of such absences, as shown in the history of Lord Bateman and other noble heroes. We need not detail all the circumstances of his banishment, all the details of the compact that was made. One detail of course was this, that there should be no corresponding; a point to which the squire found some difficulty in bringing his son to assent.

It must not be supposed that Mary Thorne or the doctor were in any way parties to, or privy to these agreements. By no means. The agreements were drawn out, and made, and signed, and sealed at Greshamsbury, and were known of nowhere else. The reader must not imagine that Lady Arabella was prepared to give up her son, if only his love should remain constant for one year. Neither did Lady Arabella consent to any such arrangement;—nor did the squire. It was settled rather in this wise; that Frank should be subjected to no torturing process, pestered to give no promises, should in no way be bullied about Mary,—that is, not at present,—if he would go away for a year. Then, at the end of the year, the matter should be again discussed. Agreeing to this, Frank took his departure, and was absent as per agreement.

What were Mary's fortunes immediately after his departure must be shortly told, and then we will again join some of our Greshamsbury friends at a period about a month before Frank's return.

When Sir Louis saw Frank Gresham standing by Mary's donkey, with his arms round Mary's knees, he began to fear that there must be something in it. He had intended that very day to throw himself at Mary's feet, and now it appeared to his inexperienced eyes as though somebody else had been at the same work before him. This not unnaturally made him cross; so, after having sullenly wished the visitor good-bye, he betook himself to his room, and there drank curaçoa alone, instead of coming down to dinner.

This he did for two or three days, and then, taking heart of grace, he remembered that, after all, he had very many advantages over young Gresham. In the first place, he was a baronet, and could make his wife a "lady." In the next place, Frank's father was alive and like to live, whereas, his own was dead. He possessed Boxall Hill in his own right, but his rival had neither house nor land of his own. After all, might it not be possible for him also to put his arm round Mary's knees;—her knees, or her waist, or, perhaps, even her neck? Faint heart never won fair lady. At any rate, he would try.

And he did try. With what result, as regards Mary, need hardly be told. He certainly did not get nearly so far as putting his hand even upon her knee before he was made to understand that it "was no go," as he graphically described it to his mother. He tried once and again. On the first time Mary was very civil, though very determined. On the second, she was

more determined, though less civil; and then she told him, that if he pressed her further he would drive her from his mother's house. There was something then about Mary's eye, a fixed composure round her mouth, and an authority in her face, which went far to quell him; and he did not press her again.

He immediately left Boxall Hill, and, returning to London, had more violent recourse to the curaçoa. It was not long before the doctor heard of him, and was obliged to follow him, and then again occurred those frightful scenes in which the poor wretch had to expiate, either in terrible delirium or more terrible prostration of spirits, the vile sin which his father had so early taught him.

Then Mary returned to her uncle's home. Frank was gone, and she therefore could resume her place at Greshamsbury. Yes, she came back to Greshamsbury; but Greshamsbury was by no means now the same place that it was formerly. Almost all intercourse was now over between the doctor and the Greshamsbury people. He rarely ever saw the squire, and then only on business. Not that the squire had purposely quarrelled with him; but Dr. Thorne himself had chosen that it should be so since Frank had openly proposed for his niece. Frank was now gone, and Lady Arabella was in arms against him. It should not be said that he kept up any intimacy for the sake of aiding the lovers in their love. No one should rightfully accuse him of inveigling the heir to marry his niece.

Mary, therefore, found herself utterly separated from Beatrice. She was not even able to learn what Beatrice would think or did think of the engagement as it now stood. She could not even explain to her

friend that love had been too strong for her, and endeavour to get some comfort from that friend's absolution from her sin. This estrangement was now carried so far that she and Beatrice did not even meet on neutral ground. Lady Arabella made it known to Miss Oriel that her daughter could not meet Mary Thorne, even as strangers meet; and it was made known to others also. Mrs. Yates Umbleby, and her dear friend Miss Gushing, to whose charming tea-parties none of the Greshamsbury ladies went above once in a twelvemonth, talked through the parish of this distressing difficulty. They would have been so happy to have asked dear Mary Thorne, only the Greshamsbury ladies did not approve.

Mary was thus tabooed from all society in the place in which a twelvemonth since she had been, of all its denizens, perhaps the most courted. In those days no bevy of Greshamsbury young ladies had fairly represented the Greshamsbury young ladyhood if Mary Thorne was not there. Now she was excluded from all such bevies. Patience did not quarrel with her, certainly;—came to see her frequently;—invited her to walk;—invited her frequently to the parsonage. But Mary was shy of acceding to such invitations, and at last frankly told her friend Patience, that she would not again break bread in Greshamsbury in any house in which she was not thought fit to meet the other guests who habitually resorted there.

In truth, both the doctor and his niece were very sore, but they were of that temperament that keeps all its soreness to itself. Mary walked out by herself boldly, looking at least as though she were indifferent to all the world. She was, indeed, hardly treated.

Young ladies' engagements are generally matters of profoundest secrecy, and are hardly known of by their near friends till marriage is a thing settled. But all the world knew of Mary's engagement within a month of that day on which she had neglected to expel Frank's finger from her hand. It had been told openly through the country-side that she had confessed her love for the young squire. Now it is disagreeable for a young lady to walk about under such circumstances, especially so when she has no female friend to keep her in countenance, more especially so when the gentleman is of such importance in the neighbourhood as Frank was in that locality. It was a matter of moment to every farmer, and every farmer's wife, which bride Frank should marry of those two bespoken for him; Mary, namely, or Money. Every yokel about the place had been made to understand that, by some feminine sleight of hand, the doctor's niece had managed to trap Master Frank, and that Master Frank had been sent out of the way so that he might, if yet possible, break through the trapping. All this made life rather unpleasant to her.

One day, walking solitary in the lanes, she met that sturdy farmer to whose daughter she had in former days been so serviceable. "God blees'ee, Miss Mary," said he;—he always did bid God bless her when he saw her. "And, Miss Mary, to say my mind out freely, thee be quite gude enough for un, quite gude enough; so thee be'st tho'f he were ten squoires." There may, perhaps, have been something pleasant in the heartiness of this; but it was not pleasant to have this heart affair of hers thus publicly scanned and talked over; to have it known to every one that she had set her heart on

marrying Frank Gresham, and that all the Greshams had set their hearts on preventing it. And yet she could in no wise help it. No girl could have been more staid and demure, less demonstrative and boastful about her love. She had never yet spoken freely, out of her full heart, to one human being. "Oh, Frank!" All her spoken sin had been contained in that.

But Lady Arabella had been very active. It suited her better that it should be known, far and wide, that a nameless pauper,—Lady Arabella only surmised that her foe was nameless; but she did not scruple to declare it,—was intriguing to catch the heir of Greshamsbury. None of the Greshams must meet Mary Thorne. That was the edict sent about the country; and the edict was well understood. Those, therefore, were bad days for Miss Thorne.

She had never yet spoken on the matter freely, out of her full heart, to one human being. Not to one? Not to him? Not to her uncle? No, not even to him, fully and freely. She had told him that that had passed between Frank and her which amounted, at any rate on his part, to a proposal. "Well, dearest, and what was your answer?" said her uncle, drawing her close to him, and speaking in his kindest voice.

"I hardly made any answer, uncle."

"You did not reject him, Mary?"

"No, uncle;" and then she paused;—he had never known her tremble as she now trembled. "But if you say that I ought, I will," she added, drawing every word from herself with difficulty.

"I say you ought, Mary! Nay; but this question you must answer yourself."

"Must I?" said she, plaintively. And then she sat for the next half-hour with her head against his shoulder; but nothing more was said about it. They both acquiesced in the sentence that had been pronounced against them, and went on together more lovingly than before.

The doctor was quite as weak as his niece; nay, weaker. She hesitated fearfully as to what she ought to do;—whether she should obey her heart or the dictates of Greshamsbury. But he had other doubts than hers, which nearly set him wild when he strove to bring his mind to a decision. He himself was now in possession,—of course as trustee only,—of the title-deeds of the estate; more of the estate, much more belonged to the heirs under Sir Roger Scatcherd's will than to the squire. It was now more than probable that that heir must be Mary Thorne. His conviction became stronger and stronger that no human efforts would keep Sir Louis in the land of the living till he was twenty-five. Could he, therefore, wisely or honestly, in true friendship to the squire, to Frank, or to his niece, take any steps to separate two persons who loved each other, and whose marriage would in all human probability be so suitable?

And yet he could not bring himself to encourage it. The idea of "looking after dead men's shoes" was abhorrent to his mind, especially when the man whose death he contemplated had been so trusted to him as had been Sir Louis Scatcherd. He could not speak of the event, even to the squire, as being possible. So he kept his peace from day to day, and gave no counsel to Mary in the matter.

And then he had his own individual annoyances,

and very aggravating annoyances they were. The carriage,—or rather post-chaise,—of Dr. Fillgrave was now frequent in Greshamsbury, passing him constantly in the street, among the lanes, and on the high-roads. It seemed as though Dr. Fillgrave could never get to his patients at the big house without showing himself to his beaten rival, either on his way thither or on his return. This alone would, perhaps, not have hurt our doctor much; but it did hurt him to know that Dr. Fillgrave was attending the squire for a little incipient gout, and that dear Nina was in measles under those unloving hands.

And then, also, the old-fashioned phaeton of old-fashioned old Dr. Century was seen to rumble up to the big house, and it became known that Lady Arabella was not very well. "Not very well," when pronounced in a low, grave voice about Ladies Arabella, always means something serious. And, in this case, something serious was meant. Lady Arabella was not only ill, but frightened. It appeared, even to her, that Dr. Fillgrave himself hardly knew what he was about, that he was not so sure in his opinion, so confident in himself, as Dr. Thorne used to be. How should he be, seeing that Dr. Thorne had medically had Lady Arabella in his hands for the last ten years?

If sitting with dignity in his hired carriage, and stepping with authority up the big front steps would have done anything, Dr. Fillgrave might have done much. Lady Arabella was greatly taken with his looks when he first came to her, and it was only when she by degrees perceived that the symptoms, which she knew so well, did not yield to him that she began to doubt those looks.

After a while Dr. Fillgrave himself suggested Dr. Century. "Not that I fear anything, Lady Arabella," said he,—lying hugely, for he did fear; fear both for himself and for her. "But Dr. Century has great experience, and in such a matter, when the interests are so important, one cannot be too safe."

So Dr. Century came and toddled slowly into her ladyship's room. He did not say much; he left the talking to his learned brother, who certainly was able to do that part of the business. But Dr. Century, though he said little, looked very grave, and by no means quieted Lady Arabella's mind. She, as she saw the two putting their heads together, already felt misgivings that she had done wrong. She knew that she could not be safe without Dr. Thorne at her bedside, and she already felt that she had exercised a most injudicious courage in driving him away.

"Well, doctor?" said she, as soon as Dr. Century had toddled downstairs to see the squire.

"Oh, we shall be all right, Lady Arabella; all right, very soon! But we must be very careful, very careful; I am glad I 've had Century here, very; but there 's nothing to alter; little or nothing."

There were but few words spoken between Dr. Century and the squire; but few as they were, they frightened Mr. Gresham. When Dr. Fillgrave came down the grand stairs, a servant waited at the bottom to ask him also to go to the squire. Now there never had been much cordiality between the squire and Dr. Fillgrave, though Mr. Gresham had consented to take a preventive pill from his hands, and the little man therefore swelled himself out somewhat more than ordinarily as he followed the servant.

"Dr. Fillgrave," said the squire, at once beginning the conversation, "Lady Arabella is, I fear, in danger."

"Well, no; I hope not in danger, Mr. Gresham. I certainly believe I may be justified in expressing a hope that she is not in danger. Her state is, no doubt, rather serious,—rather serious,—as Dr. Century has probably told you;" and Dr. Fillgrave made a bow to the old man, who sat quiet in one of the dining-room arm-chairs.

"Well, doctor," said the squire, "I have not any grounds on which to doubt your judgment." Dr. Fillgrave bowed, but with the stiffest, slightest inclination which a head could possibly make. He rather thought that Mr. Gresham had no ground for doubting his judgment. "Nor do I." The doctor bowed, and a little, a very little less stiffly. "But, doctor, I think that something ought to be done."

The doctor this time did his bowing merely with his eyes and mouth. The former he closed for a moment, the latter he pressed; and then decorously rubbed his hands one over the other.

"I am afraid, Dr. Fillgrave, that you and my friend Thorne are not the best friends in the world."

"No, Mr. Gresham, no; I may go so far as to say we are not."

"Well, I am sorry for it."

"Perhaps, Mr. Gresham, we need hardly discuss it; but there have been circumstances——"

"I am not going to discuss anything, Dr. Fillgrave. I say I am sorry for it, because I believe that prudence will imperatively require Lady Arabella to have Dr. Thorne back again. Now, if you would not object to meet him——"

"Mr. Gresham, I beg pardon; I beg pardon, indeed; but you must really excuse me. Dr. Thorne has, in my estimation——"

"But, Dr. Fillgrave——"

"Mr. Gresham, you really must excuse me. You really must, indeed. Anything else that I could do for Lady Arabella, I should be most happy to do; but after what has passed, I cannot meet Dr. Thorne; I really cannot. You must not ask me to do so, Mr. Gresham. And, Mr. Gresham," continued the doctor, "I did understand from Lady Arabella that his,—that is, Dr. Thorne's,—conduct to her ladyship had been such,—so very outrageous, I may say, that,—that,—that,—of course, Mr. Gresham, you know best; but I did think that Lady Arabella herself was quite unwilling to see Dr. Thorne again." Dr. Fillgrave looked very big, and very dignified, and very exclusive.

The squire did not again ask him. He had no warrant for supposing that Lady Arabella would receive Dr. Thorne if he did come; and he saw that it was useless to attempt to overcome the rancour of a man so pig-headed as the little Galen now before him. Other propositions were then broached, and it was at last decided that assistance should be sought for from London, in the person of the great Sir Omicron Pie.

Sir Omicron came, and Drs. Fillgrave and Century were there to meet him. When they all assembled in Lady Arabella's room, the poor woman's heart almost sank within her,—as well it might, at such a sight. If she could only reconcile it with her honour, her consistency, with her high De Courcy principles, to send once more for Dr. Thorne. Oh, Frank! Frank! to what misery has your disobedience brought your mother!

Sir Omicron and the lesser provincial lights had their consultation, and the lesser lights went their way to Barchester and Silverbridge, leaving Sir Omicron to enjoy the hospitality of Greshamsbury. "You should have Thorne back here, Mr. Gresham," said Sir Omicron, almost in a whisper, when they were quite alone. "Dr. Fillgrave is a very good man, and so is Dr. Century; very good, I am sure. But Thorne has known her ladyship so long." And then, on the following morning, Sir Omicron also went his way.

And then there was a scene between the squire and her ladyship. Lady Arabella had given herself credit for great good generalship when she found that the squire had been induced to take that pill. We have all heard of the little end of the wedge, and we have most of us an idea that the little end is the difficulty. That pill had been the little end of Lady Arabella's wedge. Up to that period she had been struggling in vain to make a severance between her husband and her enemy. That pill should do the business. She well knew how to make the most of it; to have it published in Greshamsbury that the squire had put his gouty toe into Dr. Fillgrave's hands; how to let it be known—especially at that humble house in the corner of the street,—that Fillgrave's prescriptions now ran current through the whole establishment. Dr. Thorne did hear of it, and did suffer. He had been a true friend to the squire, and he thought the squire should have stood to him more stanchly.

"After all," said he to himself, "perhaps it 's as well. Perhaps it will be best that I should leave this place altogether." And then he thought of Sir Roger and his will, and of Mary and her lover; and then of

Mary's birth, and of his own theoretical doctrines as to pure blood. And so his troubles multiplied, and he saw no present daylight through them.

Such had been the way in which Lady Arabella had got in the little end of the wedge. And she would have triumphed joyfully had not her incessant doubts and fears as to herself then come in to check her triumph and destroy her joy. She had not yet confessed to any one her secret regret for the friend she had driven away. She hardly yet acknowledged to herself that she did regret him; but she was uneasy, frightened, and in low spirits.

"My dear," said the squire, sitting down by her bedside, "I want to tell you what Sir Omicron said as he went away."

"Well?" said her ladyship, sitting up and looking frightened.

"I don't know how you may take it, Bell; but I think it very good news." The squire never called his wife Bell, except when he wanted her to be on particularly good terms with him.

"Well?" said she, again. She was not over-anxious to be gracious, and did not reciprocate his familiarity.

"Sir Omicron says that you should have Thorne back again, and upon my honour, I cannot but agree with him. Now, Thorne is a clever man, a very clever man; nobody denies that; and then, you know——"

"Why did not Sir Omicron say that to me?" said her ladyship, sharply, all her disposition in Dr. Thorne's favour becoming wonderfully damped by her husband's advocacy.

"I suppose he thought it better to say it to me," said the squire, rather curtly.

"He should have spoken to myself," said Lady Arabella, who, though she did not absolutely doubt her husband's word, gave him credit for having induced and led on Sir Omicron to the uttering of this opinion. "Dr. Thorne has behaved to me in so gross, so indecent a manner! And then, as I understand, he is absolutely encouraging that girl!"

"Now, Bell, you are quite wrong——"

"Of course I am; I always am quite wrong."

"Quite wrong in mixing up two things;—Dr. Thorne as an acquaintance, and Dr. Thorne as a doctor."

"It is dreadful to have him here, even standing in the room with me. How can one talk to one's doctor openly and confidentially when one looks upon him as one's worst enemy?" And Lady Arabella, softening, almost melted into tears.

"My dear, you cannot wonder that I should be anxious for you." Lady Arabella gave a little snuffle, which might be taken as a not very eloquent expression of thanks for the squire's solicitude, or as an ironical jeer at his want of sincerity. "And, therefore, I have not lost a moment in telling you what Sir Omicron said. 'You should have Thorne back here;' those were his very words. You can think it over, my dear. And remember this, Bell; if he is to do any good no time should be lost." Then the squire left the room and Lady Arabella remained alone, perplexed by many doubts.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. ORIEL.

I MUST now, shortly,—as shortly as it is in my power to do it,—introduce a new character to my reader. Mention has been made of the rector of Greshamsbury: but, hitherto, no opportunity has offered itself for the Rev. Caleb Oriel to come upon the boards.

Mr. Oriel was a man of family and fortune, who, having gone to Oxford with the usual views of such men, had become inoculated there with very high-church principles, and had gone into orders influenced by a feeling of enthusiastic love for the priesthood. He was by no means an ascetic,—such men, indeed, seldom are;—nor was he a devotee. He was a man well able, and certainly willing, to do the work of a parish clergyman, and when he became one, he was efficacious in his profession. But it may perhaps be said of him, without speaking slanderously, that his original calling, as a young man, was rather to the outward and visible signs of religion than to its inward and spiritual graces.

He delighted in lecterns and credence-tables, in services at dark hours of winter mornings when no one would attend, in high waistcoats and narrow white neckties, in chanted services and intoned prayers, and in all the paraphernalia of Anglican formalities which have given such offence to those of our brethren who

live in daily fear of the scarlet lady. Many of his friends declared that Mr. Oriel would sooner or later deliver himself over body and soul to that lady; but there was no need to fear for him; for though sufficiently enthusiastic to get out of bed at five A.M. on winter mornings,—he did so, at least all through his first winter at Greshamsbury,—he was not made of that stuff which is necessary for a stanch, burning, self-denying convert. It was not in him to change his very sleek black coat for a Capuchin's filthy cassock, nor his pleasant parsonage for some dirty hole in Rome. And it was better so both for him and others. There are but few, very few, to whom it is given to be a Huss, a Wickliffe, or a Luther; and a man gains but little by being a false Huss, or a false Luther;—and his neighbours gain less.

But certain lengths in self-privation Mr. Oriel did go;—at any rate, for some time. He eschewed matrimony, imagining that it became him as a priest to do so; he fasted rigorously on Fridays; and the neighbours declared that he scourged himself.

Mr. Oriel was, as it has been said, a man of fortune; that is to say, when he came of age he was master of thirty thousand pounds. When he took it into his head to go into the church, his friends bought for him the next presentation to the living of Greshamsbury; and, a year after his ordination, the living falling in, Mr. Oriel brought himself and his sister to the rectory.

Mr. Oriel soon became popular. He was a dark-haired, good-looking man, of polished manners, agreeable in society, not given to monkish austerities,—except in the matter of Fridays,—nor yet to the low-church severity of demeanour. He was thoroughly a

gentleman, good-humoured, inoffensive, and sociable. But he had one fault; he was not a marrying man.

On this ground there was a feeling against him so strong as almost at one time to throw him into serious danger. It was not only that he should be sworn against matrimony in his individual self,—he whom fate had made so able to sustain the weight of a wife and family; but what an example was he setting! If other clergymen all around should declare against wives and families, what was to become of the country, what was to be done with the rural districts? The religious observances, as regards women, of a Brigham Young were hardly so bad as this!

There were around Greshamsbury very many unmarried ladies. I believe there generally are so round most such villages. From the great house he did not receive much annoyance. Beatrice was then only just on the verge of being brought out, and was not perhaps inclined to think very much of a young clergyman; and Augusta certainly intended to fly at higher game. But there were the Miss Athelings, the daughters of a neighbouring clergyman, who were ready to go all lengths with him in high-church matters, except as to that one tremendously papal step of celibacy; and the two Miss Hesterwells, of Hesterwell Park, the younger of whom boldly declared her purpose of civilising the savage; and Mrs. Opie Green, a very pretty widow, with a very pretty jointure, who lived in a very pretty house about a mile from Greshamsbury, and who declared her opinion that Mr. Oriel was quite right in his view of a clergyman's position. How could a woman, situated as she was, have the comfort of a clergyman's attention if he were to be regarded just as

any other man? She could now know in what light to regard Mr. Oriel, and would be able without scruple to avail herself of his zeal. So she did avail herself of his zeal,—and that without any scruple.

And then there was Miss Gushing,—a young thing. Miss Gushing had a great advantage over the other competitors for the civilisation of Mr. Oriel, namely, in this,—that she was able to attend his morning services. If Mr. Oriel was to be reached in any way, it was probable that he might be reached in this way. If anything could civilise him, this would do it. Therefore, the young thing, through all one long, tedious winter, tore herself from her warm bed, and was to be seen,—no, not seen, but heard,—entering Mr. Oriel's church at six o'clock. With indefatigable assiduity the responses were made, uttered from under a close bonnet, and out of a dark corner, in an enthusiastically feminine voice, through the whole winter.

Nor did Miss Gushing altogether fail in her object. When a clergyman's daily audience consists of but one person, and that person is a young lady, it is hardly possible that he should not become personally intimate with her; hardly possible that he should not be in some measure grateful. Miss Gushing's responses came from her with such fervour, and she begged for ghostly advice with such eager longing to have her scruples satisfied, that Mr. Oriel had nothing for it but to give way to a certain amount of civilisation.

By degrees it came to pass that Miss Gushing could never get her final prayer said, her shawl and boa adjusted, and stow away her nice new prayer-book with the red letters inside and the cross on the back, till Mr. Oriel had been into his vestry and got rid of his surplice.

And then they met at the church-porch, and naturally walked together till Mr. Oriel's cruel gateway separated them. The young thing did sometimes think that, as the parson's civilisation progressed, he might have taken the trouble to walk with her as far as Mr. Yates Umbleby's hall-door; but she had hope to sustain her, and a firm resolve to merit success, even though she might not attain it.

"Is it not ten thousand pities," she once said to him, "that none here should avail themselves of the inestimable privilege which your coming has conferred upon us? Oh, Mr. Oriel, I do so wonder at it! To me it is so delightful! The morning service in the dark church is so beautiful, so touching!"

"I suppose they think it is a bore getting up so early," said Mr. Oriel.

"Ah, a bore!" said Miss Gushing, in an enthusiastic tone of depreciation. "How insensate they must be! To me it gives a new charm to life. It quiets one for the day; makes one so much fitter for one's daily trials and daily troubles. Does it not, Mr. Oriel?"

"I look upon morning prayer as an imperative duty, certainly."

"Oh, certainly, a most imperative duty; but so delicious at the same time. I spoke to Mrs. Umbleby about it, but she said she could not leave the children."

"No; I dare say not," said Mr. Oriel.

"And Mr. Umbleby said his business kept him up so late at night."

"Very probably. I hardly expect the attendance of men of business."

"But the servants might come, might n't they, Mr. Oriel?"

"I fear that servants seldom can have time for daily prayers in church."

"Oh, ah, no; perhaps not." And then Miss Gushing began to bethink herself of whom should be composed the congregation which it must be presumed Mr. Oriel wished to see around him. But on this matter he did not enlighten her.

Then Miss Gushing took to fasting on Fridays, and made some futile attempts to induce her priest to give her the comfort of confessional absolution. But, unfortunately, the zeal of the master waxed cool as that of the pupil waxed hot; and, at last, when the young thing returned to Greshamsbury from an autumn excursion which she had made with Mrs. Umbleby to Weston-super-Mare, she found that the delicious morning services had died a natural death. Miss Gushing did not on that account give up the game, but she was bound to fight with no particular advantage in her favour.

Miss Oriel, though a good churchwoman, was by no means a convert to her brother's extremest views, and perhaps gave but scanty credit to the Gushings, Athelings, and Opie Greens for the sincerity of their religion. But, nevertheless, she and her brother were stanch friends; and she still hoped to see the day when he might be induced to think that an English parson might get through his parish work with the assistance of a wife better than he could do so without such feminine encumbrance. The girl whom she selected for his bride was not the young thing, but Beatrice Gresham.

And at last it seemed probable to Mr. Oriel's nearest friends that he was in a fair way to be overcome. Not

that he had begun to make love to Beatrice, or committed himself by the utterance of any opinion as to the propriety of clerical marriages; but he daily became looser about his peculiar tenets, raved less immoderately than heretofore as to the atrocity of the Greshamsbury church-pews, and was observed to take some opportunities of conversing alone with Beatrice. Beatrice had always denied the imputation,—this had usually been made by Mary in their happy days,—with vehement asseverations of anger; and Miss Gushing had tittered, and expressed herself as supposing that great people's daughters might be as barefaced as they pleased.

All this had happened previous to the great Greshamsbury feud. Mr. Oriel gradually got himself into a way of sauntering up to the great house, sauntering into the drawing-room for the purpose, as I am sure he thought, of talking to Lady Arabella, and then of sauntering home again, having usually found an opportunity for saying a few words to Beatrice during the visit. This went on all through the feud up to the period of Lady Arabella's illness, and then, one morning, about a month before the date fixed for Frank's return, Mr. Oriel found himself engaged to Miss Beatrice Gresham.

From the day that Miss Gushing heard of it,—which was not however for some considerable time after this,—she became an independent methodist. She could no longer, she said at first, have any faith in any religion; and for an hour or so she was almost tempted to swear that she could no longer have any faith in any man. She had nearly completed a worked cover for a credence-table when the news reached her, as to

which, in the young enthusiasm of her heart, she had not been able to remain silent; it had already been promised to Mr. Oriel; that promise she swore should not be kept. He was an apostate, she said, from his principles; an utter pervert; a false, designing man, with whom she would never have trusted herself alone on dark mornings had she known that he had such grovelling, worldly inclinations. So Miss Gushing became an independent methodist; the credence-table covering was cut up into slippers for the preacher's feet; and the young thing herself, more happy in this direction than she had been in the other, became the arbiter of that preacher's domestic happiness.

But this little history of Miss Gushing's future life is premature. Mr. Oriel became engaged demurely, nay, almost silently, to Beatrice, and no one out of their own immediate families was at the time informed of the matter. It was arranged very differently from those two other matches,—embryo, or not embryo, those, namely, of Augusta with Mr. Moffat, and Frank with Mary Thorne. All Barsetshire had heard of them; but that of Beatrice and Mr. Oriel was managed in a much more private manner. "I do think you are a happy girl," said Patience to her one morning.

"Indeed I am."

"He is so good. You don't know how good he is as yet. He never thinks of himself, and thinks so much of those he loves." Beatrice took her friend's hand in her own and kissed it. She was full of joy. When a girl is about to be married, when she may lawfully talk of her love, there is no music in her ears so sweet as the praises of her lover. "I made up my mind from the first that he should marry you."

"Nonsense, Patience."

"I did, indeed. I made up my mind that he should marry; and there were only two to choose from."

"Me and Miss Gushing?" said Beatrice, laughing.

"No; not exactly Miss Gushing. I had not many fears for Caleb there."

"I declare she 's very pretty," said Beatrice, who could afford to be good-natured. Now Miss Gushing certainly was pretty; and would have been very pretty had her nose not turned up so much, and could she have parted her hair in the centre.

"Well, I am very glad you chose me;—if it was you who chose," said Beatrice, modestly;—having, however, in her own mind a strong opinion that Mr. Oriel had chosen for himself, and had never had any doubt in the matter. "And who was the other?"

"Can't you guess?"

"I won't guess any more; perhaps Mrs. Green."

"Oh, no; certainly not a widow. I don't like widows marrying. But of course you could guess if you would. Of course it was Mary Thorne. But I soon saw Mary would not do, for two reasons. Caleb would never have liked her well enough, nor would she ever have liked him."

"Not like him! oh, I hope she will; I do so love Mary Thorne."

"So do I, dearly; and so does Caleb; but he could never have loved her as he does you."

"But, Patience, have you told Mary?"

"No, I have told no one, and shall not without your leave."

"Ah, you must tell her! Tell it with my best, and kindest, and warmest love. Tell her how happy I

am, and how I long to talk to her. Tell her that I will have her for my bridesmaid. Oh, I do hope that before that all this horrid quarrel will be settled!"

Patience undertook the commission, and did tell Mary;—did give her also the message which Beatrice had sent. And Mary was rejoiced to hear it; for though, as Patience had said of her, she had never herself felt any inclination to fall in love with Mr. Oriel, she believed him to be one in whose hands her friend's happiness would be secure. Then, by degrees, the conversation changed from the loves of Mr. Oriel and Beatrice to the troubles of Frank Gresham and herself. "She says, that let what will happen you shall be one of her bridesmaids."

"Ah, yes, dear Trichy! that was settled between us in auld lang syne; but those settlements are all unsettled now, must all be broken. No, I cannot be her bridesmaid; but I shall yet hope to see her once before her marriage."

"And why not be her bridesmaid? Lady Arabella will hardly object to that."

"Lady Arabella!" said Mary, curling her lip with deep scorn. "I do not care that for Lady Arabella," and she let her silver thimble fall from her fingers on to the table. "If Beatrice invited me to her wedding, she might manage as to that. I should ask no question as to Lady Arabella."

"Then why not come to it?"

She remained silent for a while, and then boldly answered, "Though I do not care for Lady Arabella, I do care for Mr. Gresham;—and I do care for his son."

"But the squire always loved you."

"Yes, and therefore I will not be there to vex his

sight. I will tell you the truth, Patience. I can never be in that house again till Frank Gresham is a married man, or till I am about to be a married woman. I do not think they have treated me well, but I will not treat them ill."

"I am sure you will not do that," said Miss Oriel.

"I will endeavour not to do so; and, therefore, will go to none of their fêtes! No, Patience." And then she turned her head to the arm of the sofa, and silently, with audible sobs, hiding her face, she endeavoured to get rid of her tears unseen. For one moment she had all but resolved to pour out the whole truth of her love into her friend's ears; but suddenly she changed her mind. Why should she talk of her own unhappiness? Why should she speak of her own love when she was fully determined not to speak of Frank's promises?

"Mary, dear Mary."

"Anything but pity, Patience; anything but that," said she, convulsively, swallowing down her sobs, and rubbing away her tears. "I cannot bear that. Tell Beatrice from me, that I wish her every happiness; and, with such a husband I am sure she will be happy. I wish her every joy; give her my kindest love; but tell her I cannot be at her marriage. Oh, I should so like to see her; not there, you know, but here, in my own room, where I still have liberty to speak!"

"But why should you decide now? She is not to be married yet, you know."

"Now, or this day twelvemonth, can make no difference. I will not go into that house again, unless,—but never mind. I will not go into it at all! never, never again. If I could forgive her for myself, I could not forgive her for my uncle. But tell me, Patience,

C. M. GRANT.

might not Beatrice now come here? It is so dreadful to see her every Sunday in church and never to speak to her, never to kiss her. She seems to look away from me as though she too had chosen to quarrel with me."

Miss Oriel promised to do her best. She could not imagine, she said, that such a visit could be objected to on such an occasion. She would not advise Beatrice to come without telling her mother; but she could not think that Lady Arabella would be so cruel as to make any objection, knowing, as she could not but know, that her daughter, when married, would be at liberty to choose her own friends. "Good-bye, Mary," said Patience. "I wish I knew how to say more to comfort you."

"Oh, comfort! I don't want comfort. I want to be let alone."

"That 's just it. You are so ferocious in your scorn, so unbending, so determined to take all the punishment that comes in your way."

"What I do take, I 'll take without complaint," said Mary. Then they kissed each other and parted.

CHAPTER X.

A MORNING VISIT.

It must be remembered that Mary, among her miseries, had to suffer this;—that since Frank's departure, now nearly twelve months ago, she had not heard a word about him; or rather, she had only heard that he was very much in love with some lady in London. This news reached her in a manner so circuitous, and from such a doubtful source,—it seemed to her to savour so strongly of Lady Arabella's precautions,—that she attributed it at once to malice and blew it to the winds. It might not improbably be the case that Frank was untrue to her; but she would not take it for granted because she was now told so. It was more than probable that he should amuse himself with some one; flirting was his prevailing sin; and if he did flirt, the most would of course be made of it.

But she found it to be very desolate to be thus left alone without a word of comfort or a word of love; without being able to speak to any one of what filled her heart; doubting, nay, more than doubting, being all but sure that her passion must terminate in misery. Why had she not obeyed her conscience and her better instinct in that moment when the necessity for deciding had come upon her? Why had she allowed him to understand that he was the master of her heart? Did

she not know that there was everything against such a marriage as that which he proposed? Had she not done wrong, very wrong, even to think of it? Had she not sinned deeply against Mr. Gresham, who had ever been so kind to her? Could she hope, was it possible, that a boy like Frank should be true to his first love? And, if he were true, if he were ready to go to the altar with her to-morrow, ought she to allow him to degrade himself by such a marriage?

There was, alas! some truth about the London lady. Frank had taken his degree, as arranged, and had then gone abroad for the winter, doing the fashionable things, going up the Nile, crossing over to Mount Sinai, thence over the long desert to Jerusalem, and home by Damascus, Beyrout, and Constantinople, bringing back a long beard, a red cap, and a chibook, just as our grandfathers used to go through Italy and Switzerland, and our fathers to spend a season in Paris. He had then remained for a couple of months in London, going through all the society which the De Courcys were able to open to him. And it was true that a certain belle of the season, of that season and some others, had been captivated,—for the tenth time,—by the silken sheen of his long beard. Frank had probably been more demonstrative, perhaps even more susceptible, than he should have been; and hence the rumour, which had all too willingly been forwarded to Greshamsbury.

But young Gresham had also met another lady in London, namely, Miss Dunstable. Mary would indeed have been grateful to Miss Dunstable, could she have known all that lady did for her. Frank's love was never allowed to flag. When he spoke of the

difficulties in his way, she twitted him by being overcome by straws; and told him that no one was worth having who was afraid of every lion that he met in his path. When he spoke of money, she bade him earn it; and always ended by offering to smooth for him any real difficulty which want of means might put in his way.

"No," Frank used to say to himself, when these offers were made, "I never intended to take her and her money together; and, therefore, I certainly will never take the money alone."

A day or two after Miss Oriel's visit, Mary received the following note from Beatrice;—

"Dearest, dearest Mary,—I shall be so happy to see you, and will come to-morrow at twelve. I have asked mamma, and she says, that for once, she has no objection. You know it is not my fault that I have never been with you; don't you? Frank comes home on the 12th. Mr. Oriel wants the wedding to be on the 1st of September; but that seems to be so very, very soon; does n't it? However, mamma and papa are all on his side. I won't write about this, though, for we shall have such a delicious talk. Oh, Mary! I have been so unhappy without you.

"Ever your own affectionate

"TRICHY.

"Monday."

Though Mary was delighted at the idea of once more having her friend in her arms, there was, nevertheless, something in this letter which oppressed her. She could not put up with the idea that Beatrice should have permission given to come to her,—just

for once. She hardly wished to be seen by permission. Nevertheless, she did not refuse the proffered visit, and the first sight of Beatrice's face, the first touch of the first embrace, dissipated for the moment all her anger.

And then Beatrice fully enjoyed the delicious talk which she had promised herself. Mary let her have her way, and for two hours all the delights and all the duties, all the comforts and all the responsibilities, of a parson's wife were discussed with almost equal ardour on both sides. The duties and responsibilities were not exactly those which too often fall to the lot of the mistress of an English vicarage. Beatrice was not doomed to make her husband comfortable, to educate her children, dress herself like a lady, and exercise open-handed charity on an income of two hundred pounds a year. Her duties and responsibilities would have to spread themselves over seven or eight times that amount of worldly burden. Living also close to Greshamsbury, and not far from Courcy Castle, she would have the full advantages and all the privileges of county society. In fact, it was all couleur de rose, and so she chatted deliciously with her friend.

But it was impossible that they should separate without something having been said as to Mary's own lot. It would, perhaps, have been better that they should do so; but this was hardly within the compass of human nature. "And, Mary, you know, I shall be able to see you as often as I like;—you and Dr. Thorne, too, when I have a house of my own."

Mary said nothing, but essayed to smile. It was but a ghastly attempt.

"You know how happy that will make me," con-

tinued Beatrice. "Of course mamma won't expect me to be led by her then. If he likes it, there can be no objection; and he will like it, you may be sure of that."

"You are very kind, Trichy," said Mary; but she spoke in a tone very different from that she would have used eighteen months ago.

"Why, what is the matter, Mary? Shan't you be glad to come to see us?"

"I do not know, dearest. That must depend on circumstances. To see you, you yourself, your own dear, sweet, loving face, must always be pleasant to me."

"And shan't you be glad to see him?"

"Yes, certainly, if he loves you."

"Of course he loves me."

"All that alone would be pleasant enough, Trichy. But what if there should be circumstances which should still make us enemies; should make your friends and my friends,—friend, I should say, for I have only one,—should make them opposed to each other?"

"Circumstances! What circumstances?"

"You are going to be married, Trichy, to the man you love; are you not?"

"Indeed, I am!"

"And is it not pleasant? Is it not a happy feeling?"

"Pleasant! happy! yes, very pleasant; very happy. But, Mary, I am not at all in such a hurry as he is," said Beatrice, naturally thinking of her own little affairs.

"And suppose I should wish to be married to the man that I love?" Mary said this slowly and gravely,

and as she spoke she looked her friend full in the face.

Beatrice was somewhat astonished, and for the moment hardly understood. "I am sure I hope you will, some day."

"No, Trichy; no, you hope just the other way. I love your brother. I love Frank Gresham. I love him quite as well, quite as warmly, as you love Caleb Oriel."

"Do you?" said Beatrice, staring with all her eyes, and giving one long sigh, as this new subject for sorrow was so distinctly put before her.

"Is that so odd?" said Mary. "You love Mr. Oriel, though you have been intimate with him hardly more than two years. Is it so odd that I should love your brother, whom I have known almost all my life?"

"But, Mary, I thought it was always understood between us that,—that,—I mean that you were not to care about him; not in the way of loving him, you know. I thought you always said so. I have always told mamma so, as if it came from yourself."

"Beatrice, do not tell anything to Lady Arabella as though it came from me. I do not want anything to be told to her, either of me or from me. Say what you like to me yourself. Whatever you will say will not anger me. Indeed, I know what you would say, —and yet I love you. Oh, I love you, Trichy,— Trichy, I do love you so much! Don't turn away from me!"

There was such a mixture in Mary's manner of tenderness and almost ferocity, that poor Beatrice could hardly follow her. "Turn away from you, Mary! no, never; but this does make me unhappy."

"It is better you should know it all, and then you will not be led into fighting my battles again. You cannot fight them so that I should win. I do love your brother; love him truly, fondly, tenderly. I would wish to have him for my husband as you wish to have Mr. Oriel."

"But, Mary, you cannot marry him!"

"Why not?" said she, in a loud voice. "Why can I not marry him? If the priest says a blessing over us, shall we not be married as well as you and your husband?"

"But you know he cannot marry unless his wife shall have money."

"Money;—money; and he is to sell himself for money! Oh, Trichy! do not you talk about money. It is horrible. But, Trichy, I will grant it. I cannot marry him; but still, I love him. He has a name, a place in the world, and fortune, family, high blood, position, everything. He has all this, and I have nothing. Of course I cannot marry him. But yet I love him."

"Are you engaged to him, Mary?"

"He is not engaged to me, but I am to him."

"Oh, Mary, that is impossible!"

"It is not impossible. It is the case. I am pledged to him; but he is not pledged to me."

"But, Mary, don't look at me in that way. I do not quite understand you. What is the good of your being engaged if you cannot marry him?"

"Good! there is no good. But can I help it, if I love him? Can I make myself not love him by just wishing it? Oh, I would do it if I could. But now you will understand why I shake my head when you

talk of my coming to your house. Your ways and my ways must be different."

Beatrice was startled, and, for a time, silenced. What Mary said of the difference of their ways was quite true. Beatrice had dearly loved her friend, and had thought of her with affection through all this long period in which they had been separated; but she had given her love and her thoughts on the understanding, as it were, that they were in unison as to the impropriety of Frank's conduct.

She had always spoken, with a grave face, of Frank and his love as of a great misfortune, even to Mary herself; and her pity for Mary had been founded on the conviction of her innocence. Now all those ideas had to be altered. Mary owned her fault, confessed herself to be guilty of all that Lady Arabella so frequently laid to her charge, and declared herself anxious to commit that very crime as to which Beatrice had been ever ready to defend her.

Had Beatrice up to this dreamed that Mary was in love with Frank, she would doubtless have sympathised with her more or less, sooner or later. As it was, it was beyond all doubt that she would soon sympathise with her. But, at the moment, the suddenness of the declaration seemed to harden her heart, and she forgot, as it were, to speak tenderly to her friend. She was silent, therefore, and dismayed; and looked as though she thought that her ways and Mary's ways must be different.

Mary saw all that was passing in the other's mind; —no, not all; all the hostility, the disappointment, the disapproval, the unhappiness, she did see; but not the under-current of love, which was strong enough to well

up and drown all these, if only time could be allowed for it to do so. "I am glad I have told you," said Mary, curbing herself, "for deceit and hypocrisy are detestable."

"It was a misunderstanding, not deceit," said Beatrice.

"Well, now we understand each other; now you know that I have a heart within me, which, like those of some others, has not always been under my own control. Lady Arabella believes that I am intriguing to be the mistress of Greshamsbury. You, at any rate, will not think that of me. If it could be discovered to-morrow that Frank were not the heir, I might have some chance of happiness."

"But, Mary——"

"Well?"

"You say you love him."

"Yes; I do say so."

"But if he does not love you, will you cease to do so?"

"If I have a fever, I will get rid of it if I can. In such case I must do so, or die."

"I fear," continued Beatrice, "you hardly know, perhaps do not think, what is Frank's real character. He is not made to settle down early in life. Even now, I believe he is attached to some lady in London, whom, of course, he cannot marry." Beatrice said this in perfect trueness of heart. She had heard of Frank's new love-affair, and believing what she had heard, thought it best to tell the truth. But the information was not of a kind to quiet Mary's spirit.

"Very well," said she, "let it be so. I have nothing to say against it."

"But are you not preparing wretchedness and unhappiness for yourself?"

"Very likely."

"Oh, Mary, do not be so cold with me! You know how delighted I should be to have you for a sister-in-law, if only it were possible."

"Yes, Trichy; but it is impossible, is it not? Impossible that Francis Gresham of Greshamsbury should disgrace himself by marrying such a poor creature as I am. Of course, I know it; of course, I am prepared for unhappiness and misery. He can amuse himself as he likes with me or others,—with anybody. It is his privilege. It is quite enough to say that he is not made for settling down. I know my own position;—and yet I love him."

"But, Mary, has he asked you to be his wife? If so——"

"You ask home questions, Beatrice. Let me ask you one; has he ever told you that he has done so?" At this moment, Beatrice was not disposed to repeat all that Frank had said. A year ago, before he went away, he had told his sister a score of times that he meant to marry Mary Thorne if she would have him; but Beatrice now looked on all that as idle, boyish vapouring. The pity was that Mary should have looked on it differently.

"We will each keep our secret," said Mary. "Only remember this; should Frank marry to-morrow, I shall have no ground for blaming him. He is free as far as I am concerned. He can take the London lady if he likes. You may tell him so from me. But, Trichy, what else I have told you, I have told to you only."

"Oh, yes!" said Beatrice, sadly; "I shall say

nothing of it to anybody. It is very sad, very, very. I was so happy when I came here, and now I am so wretched." This was the end of that delicious talk to which she had looked forward with so much eagerness.

"Don't be wretched about me, dearest; I shall get through it. I sometimes think I was born to be unhappy, and that unhappiness agrees with me best. Kiss me now, Trichy, and don't be wretched any more. You owe it to Mr. Oriel to be as happy as the day is long."

Beatrice, as she went out, saw Dr. Thorne in his little shop on the right-hand side of the passage, deeply engaged in some derogatory branch of an apothecary's mechanical trade;—mixing a dose, perhaps, for a little child. She would have passed him without speaking if she could have been sure of doing so without notice, for her heart was full, and her eyes were red with tears; but it was so long since she had been in his house that she was more than ordinarily anxious not to appear uncourteous or unkind to him. "Good-morning, doctor," she said, changing her countenance as best she might, and attempting a smile.

"Ah, my fairy!" said he, leaving his villanous compounds, and coming out to her; "and you, too, are about to become a steady old lady."

"Indeed, I am not, doctor. I don't mean to be either steady or old for the next ten years. But who has told you? I suppose Mary has been the traitor."

"Well, I will confess, Mary was the traitor. But had n't I a right to be told, seeing how often I have brought you sugar-plums in my pocket? But I wish you joy with all my heart,—with all my heart. Oriel is an excellent, good fellow."

"Is he not, doctor?"

"An excellent, good fellow. I never heard but of one fault that he had."

"What was that fault, Dr. Thorne?"

"He once thought that clergymen should not marry. But you have cured that, and now he 's perfect."

"Thank you, doctor. I declare that you say the prettiest things of all my friends."

"And none of your friends wish prettier things for you. I do congratulate you, Beatrice, and hope you may be happy with the man you have chosen;" and taking both her hands in his, he pressed them warmly, and bade God bless her.

"Oh, doctor! I do so hope the time will come when we shall all be friends again."

"I hope it as well, my dear. But let it come, or let it not come, my regard for you will be the same." Then she parted from him also, and went her way.

Nothing was spoken of that evening between Dr. Thorne and his niece excepting Beatrice's future happiness; nothing, at least, having reference to what had passed that morning. But on the following morning circumstances led to Frank Gresham's name being mentioned.

At the usual breakfast-hour the doctor entered the parlour with a harassed face. He had an open letter in his hand, and it was at once clear to Mary that he was going to speak to her on some subject that vexed him. "That unfortunate fellow is again in trouble. Here is a letter from Greyson." Greyson was a London apothecary, who had been appointed as medical attendant to Sir Louis Scatcherd, and whose real business consisted in keeping a watch on the baronet,

and reporting to Dr. Thorne when anything was very much amiss. "Here is a letter from Greyson; he has been drunk for the last three days, and is now laid up in a terribly nervous state."

"You won't go to town again; will you, uncle?"

"I hardly know what to do. No, I think not. He talks of coming down here to Greshamsbury."

"Who, Sir Louis?"

"Yes, Sir Louis. Greyson says that he will be down as soon as he can get out of his room."

"What! to this house?"

"What other house can he come to?"

"Oh, uncle! I hope not. Pray, pray do not let him come here."

"I cannot prevent it, my dear. I cannot shut my door on him."

They sat down to breakfast, and Mary gave him his tea in silence. "I am going over to Boxall Hill before dinner," said he. "Have you any message to send to Lady Scatcherd?"

"Message! no, I have no message; not especially; give her my love, of course," she said, listlessly. And then as though a thought had suddenly struck her, she spoke with more energy. "But, could n't I go to Boxall Hill again? I should be so delighted."

"What! to run away from Sir Louis? No, dearest, we will have no more running away. He will probably also go to Boxall Hill, and he could annoy you much more there than he can here."

"But, uncle, Mr. Gresham will be home on the 12th," she said, blushing.

"What! Frank?"

"Yes. Beatrice said he was to be here on the 12th."

"And would you run away from him, too, Mary?"

"I do not know. I do not know what to do."

"No; we will have no more running away. I am sorry that you ever did so. It was my fault, altogether my fault; but it was foolish."

"Uncle, I am not happy here." As she said this, she put down the cup which she had held, and leaning her elbows on the table, rested her forehead on her hands.

"And would you be happier at Boxall Hill? It is not the place makes the happiness."

"No, I know that; it is not the place. I do not look to be happy in any place; but I should be quieter, more tranquil, elsewhere than here."

"I also sometimes think that it will be better for us to take up our staves and walk away out of Greshamsbury;—leave it altogether, and settle elsewhere;—miles, miles, miles away from here. Should you like that, dearest?"

Miles, miles, miles away from Greshamsbury! There was something in the sound that fell very cold on Mary's ears, unhappy as she was. Greshamsbury had been so dear to her;—in spite of all that had passed, was still so dear to her! Was she prepared to take up her staff, as her uncle said, and walk forth from the place with the full understanding that she was to return to it no more; with a mind resolved that there should be an inseparable gulf between her and its inhabitants? Such she knew was the proposed nature of that walking away of which her uncle spoke. So she sat there, resting on her arms, and gave no answer to the question that had been asked her.

"No, we will stay a while yet," said her uncle. "It

may come to that, but this is not the time. For one season longer let us face,—I will not say our enemies; I cannot call anybody my enemy who bears the name of Gresham." And then he went on for a moment with his breakfast. "So Frank is to be here on the 12th?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Well, dearest, I have no questions to ask you; no directions to give. I know how good you are, and how prudent; I am anxious only for your happiness."

"Happiness, uncle, is out of the question."

"I hope not. It is never out of the question, never can be out of the question. But, as I was saying, I am quite satisfied your conduct will be good, and, therefore, I have no questions to ask. We will remain here; and, whether good or evil come, we will not be ashamed to show our faces."

She sat for a while again silent, collecting her courage on the subject that was nearest her heart. She would have given the world that he should ask her questions; but she could not bid him to do so; and she found it impossible to talk openly to him about Frank unless he did so. "Will he come here?" at last she said, in a low-toned voice.

"Who? He?—Louis? Yes, I think that in all probability he will."

"No; but Frank," she said, in a still lower voice.

"Ah, my darling, that I cannot tell! But will it be well that he should come here?"

"I do not know," she said. "No, I suppose not. But, uncle, I don't think he will come."

She was now sitting on a sofa away from the table, and he got up, sat down beside her, and took her

hands in his. "Mary," said he, "you must be strong now; strong to endure, not to attack. I think you have that strength; but, if not, perhaps it will be better that we should go away."

"I will be strong," said she, rising up and going towards the door. "Never mind me, uncle; don't follow me; I will be strong. It will be base, cowardly, mean, to run away; very base in me to make you do so."

"No, dearest, not so; it will be the same to me."

"No," said she; "I will not run away from Lady Arabella. And, as for him,—if he loves this other one, he shall hear no reproach from me. Uncle, I will be strong;" and running back to him, she threw her arms round him and kissed him. And, still restraining her tears, she got safely to her bedroom. In what way she may there have shown her strength it would not be well for us to inquire.

CHAPTER XI.

A BAROUCHE AND FOUR ARRIVES AT GRESHAMSBURY.

During the last twelve months Sir Louis Scatcherd had been very efficacious in bringing trouble, turmoil, and vexation upon Greshamsbury. Now that it was too late to take steps to save himself, Dr. Thorne found that the will left by Sir Roger was so made as to entail upon him duties that he would find it almost impossible to perform. Sir Louis, though his father had wished to make him still a child in the eye of the law, was no child. He knew his own rights and was determined to exact them; and before Sir Roger had been dead three months the doctor found himself in continual litigation with a low Barchester attorney, who was acting on behalf of his, the doctor's, own ward.

And if the doctor suffered so did the squire, and so did those who had hitherto had the management of the squire's affairs. Dr. Thorne soon perceived that he was to be driven into litigation, not only with Mr. Finney, the Barchester attorney, but with the squire himself. While Finney harassed him he was compelled to harass Mr. Gresham. He was no lawyer himself; and though he had been able to manage very well between the squire and Sir Roger, and had perhaps given himself some credit for his lawyer-like ability in so do-

ing, he was utterly unable to manage between Sir Louis and Mr. Gresham.

He had, therefore, to employ a lawyer on his own account, and it seemed probable that the whole amount of Sir Roger's legacy to himself would by degrees be expended in this manner. And then, the squire's lawyers had to take up the matter; and they did so greatly to the detriment of poor Mr. Yates Umbleby, who was found to have made a mess of the affairs entrusted to him. Mr. Umbleby's accounts were incorrect; his mind was anything but clear, and he confessed, when put to it by the very sharp gentleman that came down from London, that he was "bothered;" and so, after a while, he was suspended from his duties, and Mr. Gagebee, the sharp gentleman from London, reigned over the diminished rent-roll of the Greshamsbury estate.

Thus everything was going wrong at Greshamsbury, and the squire himself was especially a sufferer. Umbleby had at any rate been his own man, and he could do what he liked with him. He could see him when he liked, and where he liked, and how he liked; could scold him if in an ill-humour, and laugh at him when in a good humour. All this Mr. Umbleby knew, and bore. But Mr. Gagebee was a very different sort of gentleman. He was the junior partner in the firm of Gumption, Gagebee, and Gagebee, of Mount Street, a house that never defiled itself with any other business than the agency business, and that in the very highest line. They drew out leases, and managed property both for the Duke of Omnium and Lord De Courcy; and ever since her marriage, it had been one of the objects dearest to Lady Arabella's heart that

the Greshamsbury acres should be superintended by the polite skill and polished legal ability of that all but elegant firm in Mount Street.

The squire had long stood firm, and had delighted in having everything done under his own eye by poor Mr. Yates Umbleby. But now, alas! he could stand it no longer. He had put off the evil day as long as he could; he had deferred the odious work of investigation till things had seemed resolved on investigating themselves; and then, when it was absolutely necessary that Mr. Umbleby should go, there was nothing for him left but to fall into the ready hands of Messrs. Gumption, Gagebee, and Gagebee.

It must not be supposed that Messrs. Gumption, Gagebee, and Gagebee were in the least like the ordinary run of attorneys. They wrote no letters for six-and-eightpence each: they collected no debts, filed no bills, made no charge per folio for "whereases" and "as aforesaids;" they did no dirty work, and probably were as ignorant of the interior of a court of law as any young lady living in their May Fair vicinity. No; their business was to manage the property of great people, draw up leases, make legal assignments, get the family marriage settlements made, and look after the wills. Occasionally, also, they had to raise money; but it was generally understood that this was done by proxy.

The firm had been going on for a hundred and fifty years, and the designation had often been altered; but it always consisted of Gumptions and Gagebees differently arranged, and no less hallowed names had ever been permitted to appear. It had been Gagebee, Gagebee, and Gumption; then Gagebee and Gump-

tion; then Gagebee, Gumption, and Gumption; then Gumption, Gumption, and Gagebee; and now it was Gumption, Gagebee, and Gagebee.

Mr. Gagebee, the junior member of this firm, was a very elegant young man. While looking at him riding in Rotten Row, you would hardly have taken him for an attorney: and had he heard that you had so taken him, he would have been very much surprised indeed. He was rather bald; not being, as people say, quite so young as he was once. His exact age was thirty-eight. But he had a really remarkable pair of jet-black whiskers, which fully made up for any deficiency as to his head; he had also dark eyes, and a beaked nose, what may be called a distinguished mouth, and was always dressed in fashionable attire. The fact was that Mr. Mortimer Gagebee, junior partner in the firm of Gumption, Gagebee, and Gagebee, by no means considered himself to be made of that very disagreeable material which mortals call small beer.

When this great firm was applied to, to get Mr. Gresham through his difficulties, and when the state of his affairs was made known to them, they at first expressed rather a disinclination for the work. But, at last, moved doubtless by their respect for the De Courcy interest, they assented; and Mr. Gagebee, junior, went down to Greshamsbury. The poor squire passed many a sad day after that before he again felt himself to be master even of his own domain.

Nevertheless, when Mr. Mortimer Gagebee visited Greshamsbury, which he did on more than one or two occasions, he was always received en grand seigneur. To Lady Arabella he was by no means an unwelcome guest, for she found herself able, for the first time in

her life, to speak confidentially on her husband's pecuniary affairs with the man who had the management of her husband's property. Mr. Gagebee also was a pet with Lady De Courcy; and being known to be a fashionable man in London, and quite a different sort of person from poor Mr. Umbleby, he was always received with smiles. He had a hundred little ways of making himself agreeable, and Augusta declared to her cousin, the Lady Amelia, after having been acquainted with him for a few months, that he would be a perfect gentleman, only that his family had never been anything but attorneys. The Lady Amelia smiled in her own peculiarly aristocratic way, shrugged her shoulders slightly, and said "that Mr. Mortimer Gagebee was a very good sort of a person,—very."

Poor Augusta felt herself snubbed, thinking, perhaps, of the tailor's son; but as there was never any appeal against the Lady Amelia, she said nothing more at that moment in favour of Mr. Mortimer Gagebee.

All these evils,—Mr. Mortimer Gagebee being the worst of them,—had Sir Louis Scatcherd brought down on the poor squire's head. There may be those who will say that the squire had brought them on himself, by running into debt; and so, doubtless, he had; but it was not the less true that the baronet's interference was unnecessary, vexatious, and one might almost say, malicious. His interests would have been quite safe in the doctor's hands, and he had, in fact, no legal right to meddle. But neither the doctor nor the squire could prevent him. Mr. Finney knew very well what he was about, if Sir Louis did not, and so the three went on, each with his own lawyer, and each

of them distrustful, unhappy, and ill at ease. This was hard upon the doctor, for he was not in debt, and had borrowed no money.

There was not much reason to suppose that the visit of Sir Louis to Greshamsbury would much improve matters. It must be presumed that he was not coming with any amicable views, but with the object rather of looking after his own;—a phrase which was now constantly in his mouth. He might probably find it necessary, while looking after his own at Greshamsbury, to say some very disagreeable things to the squire; and the doctor, therefore, hardly expected that the visit would go off pleasantly.

When last we saw Sir Louis, now nearly twelve months since, he was intent on making a proposal of marriage to Miss Thorne. This intention he carried out about two days after Frank Gresham had done the same thing. He had delayed doing so till he had succeeded in purchasing his friend Jenkins's Arab pony, imagining that such a present could not but go far in weaning Mary's heart from her other lover. Poor Mary was put to the trouble of refusing both the baronet and the pony, and a very bad time she had of it while doing so. Sir Louis was a man easily angered, and not very easily pacified, and Mary had to endure a good deal of annoyance;—from any other person she would have called it impertinence. Sir Louis, however, had to bear his rejection as best he could, and, after a perseverance of three days, returned to London in disgust.

Mr. Greyson's first letter was followed by a second; and the second was followed by the baronet in person. He also required to be received en grand seigneur,

perhaps more imperatively than Mr. Mortimer Gagebee himself. He came with four posters from the Barchester station, and had himself rattled up to the doctor's door in a way that took the breath away from all Greshamsbury. Why! the squire himself for many a long year had been contented to come home with a pair of horses; and four were never seen in the place, except when the De Courcys came to Greshamsbury, or Lady Arabella with all her daughters returned from her hard-fought metropolitan campaigns.

Sir Louis, however, came with four, and very arrogant he looked, leaning back in the barouche belonging to the George and Dragon, and wrapped up in fur, although it was now midsummer. And up in the dicky behind was a servant, more arrogant, if possible, than his master, the baronet's own man, who was the object of Dr. Thorne's especial detestation and disgust. He was a little fellow, chosen originally on account of his light weight on horseback; but if that may be considered a merit it was the only one he had. His outdoor show dress was a little tight frock-coat, round which a polished strap was always buckled tightly, a stiff white choker, leather breeches, top-boots, and a hat with a cockade stuck on one side of his head. His name was Jonah, which his master and his master's friends shortened into Joe; none, however, but those who were very intimate with his master were allowed to do so with impunity.

This Joe was Dr. Thorne's especial aversion. In his anxiety to take every possible step to keep Sir Louis from poisoning himself, he had at first attempted to enlist the baronet's "own man" in the cause. Joe had promised fairly, but had betrayed the doctor at

once, and had become the worst instrument of his master's dissipation. When, therefore, his hat and the cockade were seen, as the carriage dashed up to the door, the doctor's contentment was by no means increased.

Sir Louis was now twenty-three years old, and was a great deal too knowing to allow himself to be kept under the doctor's thumb. It had, indeed, become his plan to rebel against his guardian in almost everything. He had at first been decently submissive, with the view of obtaining increased supplies of ready money; but he had been sharp enough to perceive that, let his conduct be what it would, the doctor would keep him out of debt; but that the doing so took so large a sum that he could not hope for any further advances. In this respect, Sir Louis was perhaps more keen-witted than Dr. Thorne.

Mary, when she saw the carriage, at once ran up to her own bedroom. The doctor, who had been with her in the drawing-room, went down to meet his ward, but as soon as he saw the cockade he darted almost involuntarily into his shop and shut the door. This protection, however, lasted only for a moment. He felt that decency required him to meet his guest, and so he went forth and faced the enemy.

"I say," said Joe, speaking to Janet, who stood curtsying at the gate, with Bridget, the other maid, behind her, "I say, are there any chaps about the place to take these things,—eh? come, look sharp here." It so happened that the doctor's groom was not on the spot, and "other chaps" the doctor had none.

"Take those things, Bridget," the doctor said, com-

ing forward and offering his hand to the baronet. Sir Louis, when he saw his host, roused himself slowly from the back of his carriage.

"How do, doctor?" said he. "What terrible bad roads you have here! and upon my word, it 's as cold as winter." So saying, he slowly proceeded to descend.

Sir Louis was a year older than when we last saw him, and, in his generation, a year wiser. He had then been somewhat humble before the doctor; but now he was determined to let his guardian see that he knew how to act the baronet; that he had acquired the manners of a great man; and that he was not to be put upon. He had learnt some lessons from Jenkins, in London, and other friends of the same sort, and he was about to profit by them.

The doctor showed him to his room and then proceeded to ask after his health. "Oh, I 'm right enough," said Sir Louis. "You must n't believe all that fellow Greyson tells you. He wants me to take his salts and senna, opodeldoc, and all that sort of stuff; looks after his bill, you know,—eh? like all the rest of you. But I won't have it;—not at any price; and then he writes to you."

"I 'm glad to see you able to travel," said Dr. Thorne, who could not force himself to tell his guest that he was glad to see him at Greshamsbury.

"Oh, travel; yes, I can travel well enough! But I wish you had some better sort of trap down in these country parts. I 'm shaken to bits. And, doctor, would you tell your people to send that fellow of mine up here with hot water?"

So dismissed, the doctor went his way, and met Joe

swaggering in one of the passages, while Janet and her colleague dragged along between them a heavy article of baggage.

"Janet," said he, "go downstairs and get Sir Louis some hot water, and, Joe, do you take hold of your master's portmanteau."

Joe sulkily did as he was bid. "Seems to me," said he, turning to the girl, and speaking before the doctor was out of hearing, "seems to me, my dear, you be rather short-handed here; lots of work and nothing to get; that 's about the ticket, ain't it?" Bridget was too demurely modest to make any answer upon so short an acquaintance; so putting her end of the burden down at the strange gentleman's door, she retreated into the kitchen.

Sir Louis, in answer to the doctor's inquiries, had declared himself to be all right; but his appearance was anything but all right. Twelve months since, a life of dissipation, or rather, perhaps, a life of drinking, had not had upon him so strong an effect but that some of the salt of youth was still left;—some of the freshness of young years might still be seen in his face. But this was now all gone; his eyes were sunken and watery, his cheeks were hollow and wan, his mouth was drawn and his lips dry; his back was even bent, and his legs were unsteady under him, so that he had been forced to step down from his carriage as an old man would do. Alas, alas! he had no further chance now of ever being all right again.

Mary had secluded herself in her bedroom as soon as the carriage had driven up to the door, and there she remained till dinner-time. But she could not shut herself up altogether. It would be necessary that she

should appear at dinner; and, therefore, a few minutes before the hour, she crept out into the drawing-room. As she opened the door, she looked in timidly, expecting to see Sir Louis there; but when she saw that her uncle was the only occupant of the room, her brow cleared, and she entered with a quick step. "He 'll come down to dinner; won't he, uncle?"

"Oh, I suppose so."

"What 's he doing now?"

"Dressing, I suppose; he 's been at it this hour."

"But, uncle——"

"Well?"

"Will he come up after dinner, do you think?" Mary spoke of him as though he were some wild beast, whom her uncle insisted on having in his house.

"Goodness knows what he will do! Come up? Yes. He will not stay in the dining-room all night."

"But, dear uncle, do be serious."

"Serious!"

"Yes; serious. Don't you think I might go to bed instead of waiting?"

The doctor was saved the trouble of answering by the entrance of the baronet. He was dressed in what he considered the most fashionable style of the day. He had on a new dress-coat lined with satin, new dress-trousers, a silk waistcoat covered with chains, a white cravat, polished pumps, and silk stockings, and he carried a scented handkerchief in his hand; he had rings on his fingers, and carbuncle studs in his shirt, and he smelt as sweet as patchouli could make him. But he could hardly do more than shuffle into the room, and seemed almost to drag one of his legs behind him.

Mary, in spite of her aversion, was shocked and distressed when she saw him. He, however, seemed to think himself perfect, and was no whit abashed by the unfavourable reception which twelve months since had been paid to his suit. Mary came up and shook hands with him, and he received her with a compliment which no doubt he thought must be acceptable. "Upon my word, Miss Thorne, every place seems to agree with you; one better than another. You were looking charming at Boxall Hill; but, upon my word, charming is n't half strong enough now."

Mary sat down quietly, and the doctor assumed a face of unutterable disgust. This was the creature for whom all his sympathies had been demanded, all his best energies put in requisition; on whose behalf he was to quarrel with his oldest friends, lose his peace and quietness of life, and exercise all the functions of a loving friend! This was his self-invited guest, whom he was bound to foster, and whom he could not turn from his door.

Then dinner came, and Mary had to put her hand upon his arm. She certainly did not lean upon him, and once or twice felt inclined to give him some support. They reached the dining-room, however, the doctor following them, and then sat down, Janet waiting in the room, as was usual.

"I say, doctor," said the baronet, "had n't my man better come in and help? He 's got nothing to do, you know. We should be more cosy, should n't we?"

"Janet will manage pretty well," said the doctor.

"Oh, you 'd better have Joe; there 's nothing like a good servant at table. I say, Janet, just send that fellow in, will you?"

"We shall do very well without him," said the doctor, becoming rather red about the cheek-bones, and with a slight gleam of determination about the eye. Janet, who saw how matters stood, made no attempt to obey the baronet's order.

"Oh, nonsense, doctor; you think he 's an uppish sort of fellow, I know, and you don't like to trouble him; but when I 'm near him, he 's all right; just send him in, will you?"

"Sir Louis," said the doctor, "I 'm accustomed to none but my own woman here in my house, and if you will allow me, I 'll keep my old ways. I shall be sorry if you are not comfortable." The baronet said nothing more, and the dinner passed off slowly and wearily enough.

When Mary had eaten her fruit and escaped, the doctor got into one arm-chair and the baronet into another, and the latter began the only work of existence of which he knew anything. "That 's good port," said he; "very fair port."

The doctor loved his port wine, and thawed a little in his manner. He loved it not as a toper, but as a collector loves his pet pictures. He liked to talk about it, and think about it; to praise it, and hear it praised; to look at it turned towards the light, and to count over the years it had lain in his cellar.

"Yes," said he, "it 's pretty fair wine. It was, at least, when I got it, twenty years ago, and I don't suppose time has hurt it yet;" and he held the glass up to the window, and looked at the evening light through the ruby tint of the liquid. "Ah, dear, there 's not much of it left; more 's the pity!"

"A good thing won't last for ever. I 'll tell you

what, now; I wish I 'd brought down a dozen or two of claret. I 've some prime stuff in London; got it from Muzzle and Drug, at ninety-six shillings; it was a great favour, though. I 'll tell you what, now, I 'll send up for a couple of dozen to-morrow. I must n't drink you out of house, high and dry; must I, doctor?"

The doctor froze again immediately. "I don't think I need trouble you," said he: "I never drink claret; at least not here; and there 's enough of the old bin left to last some little time longer yet."

Sir Louis drank two or three glasses of wine very quickly after each other, and they immediately began to tell upon his weak stomach. But before he was tipsy he became more impudent and more disagreeable.

"Doctor," said he, "when are we to see any of this Greshamsbury money? That 's what I want to know."

"Your money is quite safe, Sir Louis; and the interest is paid to the day."

"Interest, yes; but how do I know how long it will be paid? I should like to see the principal. A hundred thousand pounds, or something like it, it is a precious large stake to have in one man's hands, and he preciously hard up himself. I 'll tell you what, doctor;—I shall look the squire up myself."

"Look him up?"

"Yes; look him up; ferret him out; tell him a bit of my mind. I 'll thank you to pass the bottle. D—— me, doctor; I mean to know how things are going on."

"Your money is quite safe," repeated the doctor, "and, to my mind, it could not be better invested."

"That 's all very well; d—— well, I dare say, for you and Squire Gresham——"

"What do you mean, Sir Louis?"

"Mean! why I mean that I 'll sell the squire up; that 's what I mean,—hello,—beg pardon. I 'm blessed if I have n't broken the water-jug. That comes of having water on the table. Oh, d—— me, it 's all over me." And then, getting up to avoid the flood he himself had caused, he nearly fell into the doctor's arms.

"You 're tired with your journey, Sir Louis; perhaps you 'd better go to bed."

"Well, I am a bit seedy or so. Those cursed roads of yours shake a fellow so."

The doctor rang the bell, and, on this occasion, did request that Joe might be sent for. Joe came in, and, though he was much steadier than his master, looked as though he also had found some bin of which he had approved.

"Sir Louis wishes to go to bed," said the doctor; "you had better give him your arm."

"Oh, yes; in course I will," said Joe, standing immovable about half way between the door and the table.

"I 'll just take one more glass of the old port—eh, doctor?" said Sir Louis, putting out his hand and clutching the decanter.

It is very hard for any man to deny his guest in his own house, and the doctor, at the moment, did not know how to do it; so Sir Louis got his wine, after pouring half of it over the table.

"Come in, sir, and give Sir Louis your arm," said the doctor, angrily.

"So I will, in course, if my master tells me; but, if you please, Dr. Thorne"—and Joe put his hand up to his hair in a manner that had a great deal more of impudence than reverence in it—"I just want to ax one question; where be I to sleep?"

Now this was a question which the doctor was not prepared to answer on the spur of the moment, however well Janet or Mary might have been able to do so. "Sleep!" said he, "I don't know where you are to sleep, and don't care; ask Janet."

"That 's all very well, master——"

"Hold your tongue, sirrah!" said Sir Louis. "What the devil do you want of sleep?—come here," and then, with his servant's help, he made his way up to his bedroom, and was no more heard of that night.

"Did he get tipsy?" asked Mary, almost in a whisper, when her uncle joined her in the drawing-room.

"Don't talk of it," said he. "Poor wretch! poor wretch! Let 's have some tea now, Molly, and pray don't talk any more about him to-night." Then Mary did make the tea, and did not talk any more about Sir Louis that night.

What on earth were they to do with him? He had come there self-invited; but his connection with the doctor was such, that it was impossible he should be told to go away, either he himself, or that servant of his. There was no reason to disbelieve him when he declared that he had come down to ferret out the squire. Such was, doubtless, his intention. He would ferret out the squire. Perhaps he might ferret out Lady Arabella also. Frank would be home in a few days; and he, too, might be ferreted out.

But the matter took a very singular turn, and one

quite unexpected on the doctor's part. On the morning following the little dinner of which we have spoken, one of the Greshamsbury grooms rode up to the doctor's door with two notes. One was addressed to the doctor in the squire's well-known large handwriting, and the other was for Sir Louis. Each contained an invitation to dinner for the following day; and that to the doctor was in this wise:—

"Dear Doctor,—Do come and dine here to-morrow, and bring Sir Louis Scatcherd with you. If you 're the man I take you to be, you won't refuse me. Lady Arabella sends a note for Sir Louis. There will be nobody here but Oriel, and Mr. Gagebee, who is staying in the house.

"Yours ever,

"F. N. Gresham.

"Greshamsbury, July, 185—.

"P.S. I make a positive request that you 'll come, and I think you will hardly refuse me."

The doctor read it twice before he could believe it, and then ordered Janet to take the other note up to Sir Louis. As these invitations were rather in opposition to the then existing Greshamsbury tactics, the cause of Lady Arabella's special civility must be explained.

Mr. Mortimer Gagebee was now at the house, and therefore, it must be presumed, that things were not to be allowed to go on after their old fashion. Mr. Gagebee was an acute as well as a fashionable man; one who knew what he was about, and who, moreover, had determined to give his very best efforts on

behalf of the Greshamsbury property. His energy, in this respect, will explain itself hereafter. It was not probable that the arrival in the village of such a person as Sir Louis Scatcherd should escape attention. He had heard of it before dinner, and, before the evening was over, had discussed it with Lady Arabella.

Her ladyship was not at first inclined to make much of Sir Louis, and expressed herself as but little inclined to agree with Mr. Gagebee when that gentleman suggested that he should be treated with civility at Greshamsbury. But she was at last talked over. She found it pleasant enough to have more to do with the secret management of the estate than Mr. Gresham himself; and when Mr. Gagebee proved to her, by sundry nods and winks, and subtle allusions to her own infinite good sense, that it was necessary to catch this obscene bird which had come to prey upon the estate, by throwing a little salt upon his tail, she also nodded and winked, and directed Augusta to prepare the salt according to order.

"But won't it be odd, Mr. Gagebee, asking him out of Dr. Thorne's house?"

"Oh, we must have the doctor, too, Lady Arabella; by all means ask the doctor also."

Lady Arabella's brow grew dark. "Mr. Gagebee," she said, "you can hardly believe how that man has behaved to me."

"He is altogether beneath your anger," said Mr. Gagebee, with a bow.

"I don't know. In one way he may be, but not in another. I really do not think I can sit down to table with Dr. Thorne."

But, nevertheless, Mr. Gagebee gained his point. It

was now about a week since Sir Omicron Pie had been at Greshamsbury, and the squire had, almost daily, spoken to his wife as to that learned man's last advice. Lady Arabella always answered in the same tone. "You can hardly know, Mr. Gresham, how that man has insulted me." But, nevertheless, the physician's advice had not been disbelieved. It tallied too well with her own inward convictions. She was anxious enough to have Dr. Thorne back at her bedside, if she could only get him there without damage to her pride. Her husband, she thought, might probably send the doctor there without absolute permission from herself; in which case she would have been able to scold, and show that she was offended; and, at the same time profit by what had been done. But Mr. Gresham never thought of taking so violent a step as this, and, therefore, Dr. Fillgrave still came, and her ladyship's cleverness was wasted in vain.

But Mr. Gagebee's proposition opened a door by which her point might be gained. "Well," said she, at last, with infinite self-denial, "if you think it is for Mr. Gresham's advantage, and if he chooses to ask Dr. Thorne, I will not refuse to receive him."

Mr. Gagebee's next task was to discuss the matter with the squire. Nor was this easy, for Mr. Gagebee was no favourite with Mr. Gresham. But the task was at last performed successfully. Mr. Gresham was so glad at heart to find himself able, once more, to ask his old friend to his own house; and, though it would have pleased him better that this sign of relenting on his wife's part should have reached him by other means, he did not refuse to take advantage of it; and so he wrote the above letter to Dr. Thorne.

The doctor, as we have said, read it twice; and he at once resolved stoutly that he would not go.

"Oh, do, do go!" said Mary. She well knew how wretched this feud had made her uncle. "Pray, pray go!"

"Indeed, I will not," said he. "There are some things a man should bear, and some he should not."

"You must go," said Mary, who had taken the note from her uncle's hand, and read it. "You cannot refuse him when he asks you like that."

"It will greatly grieve me; but I must refuse him."

"I also am angry, uncle; very angry with Lady Arabella; but for him, for the squire, I would go to him on my knees if he asked me in that way."

"Yes; and had he asked you, I also would have gone."

"Oh, now I shall be so wretched! It is his invitation, not hers. Mr. Gresham could not ask me. As for her, do not think of her; but do, do go when he asks you like that. You will make me so miserable if you do not. And then Sir Louis cannot go without you,"—and Mary pointed upstairs;—"and you may be sure that he will go."

"Yes; and make a beast of himself."

This colloquy was cut short by a message praying the doctor to go up to Sir Louis' room. The young man was sitting in his dressing-gown, drinking a cup of coffee at his toilet-table, while Joe was preparing his razor and hot water. The doctor's nose immediately told him that there was more in the coffee-cup than had come out of his own kitchen, and he would not let the offence pass unnoticed. "Are you taking brandy this morning, Sir Louis?"

"Just a little chasse-café," said he, not exactly understanding the word he used. "It 's all the go now; and a capital thing for the stomach."

"It 's not a capital thing for your stomach;—about the least capital thing you can take; that is, if you wish to live."

"Never mind that now, doctor, but look here. This is what we call the civil thing;—eh?" and he showed the Greshamsbury note. "Not but what they have an object, of course. I understand all that. Lots of girls there,—eh?"

The doctor took the note and read it. "It is civil," said he; "very civil."

"Well, I shall go, of course. I don't bear malice because he can't pay me the money he owes me. I 'll eat his dinner, and look at the girls. Have you an invite, too, doctor?"

"Yes; I have."

"And you 'll go?"

"I think not; but that need not deter you. But, Sir Louis——"

"Well! eh! what is it?"

"Step downstairs a moment," said the doctor, turning to the servant, "and wait till you are called for. I wish to speak to your master." Joe, for a moment, looked up at the baronet's face, as though he wanted but the slightest encouragement to disobey the doctor's orders; but not seeing it, he slowly retired, and placed himself, of course, at the keyhole.

And then the doctor began a long and very useless lecture. The first object of it was to induce his ward not to get drunk at Greshamsbury; but having got so far, he went on, and did succeed in frightening his

unhappy guest. Sir Louis did not possess the iron nerves of his father, nerves which even brandy had not been able to subdue. The doctor spoke strongly, very strongly; spoke of quick, almost immediate death in case of further excesses; spoke to him of the certainty there would be that he could not live to dispose of his own property if he could not refrain. And thus he did frighten Sir Louis. The father he had never been able to frighten. But there are men who, though they fear death hugely, fear present suffering more; who, indeed, will not bear a moment of pain if there be any mode of escape. Sir Louis was such; he had no strength of nerve, no courage, no ability to make a resolution and keep it. He promised the doctor that he would refrain; and, as he did so, he swallowed down his cup of coffee and brandy, in which the two articles bore about equal proportions.

The doctor did, at last, make up his mind to go. Whichever way he determined he found that he was not contented with himself. He did not like to trust Sir Louis by himself, and he did not like to show that he was angry. Still less did he like the idea of breaking bread in Lady Arabella's house till some amends had been made to Mary. But his heart would not allow him to refuse the petition contained in the squire's postscript, and the matter ended in his accepting the invitation.

This visit of his ward's was, in every way, pernicious to the doctor. He could not go about his business, fearing to leave such a man alone with Mary. On the afternoon of the second day, she escaped to the parsonage for an hour or so, and then walked away among the lanes, calling on some of her old friends

among the farmers' wives. But even then the doctor was afraid to leave Sir Louis. What could such a man do, left alone in a village like Greshamsbury? So he stayed at home, and the two together went over their accounts. The baronet was particular about his accounts, and said a good deal as to having Finney over to Greshamsbury. To this, however, Dr. Thorne positively refused his consent.

The evening passed off better than the preceding one;—at least, the early part of it. Sir Louis did not get tipsy; he came up to tea, and Mary, who did not feel so keenly on the subject as her uncle, almost wished that he had not done so. At ten o'clock he went to bed.

But after that new troubles came on. The doctor had gone downstairs into his study to make up some of the time which he had lost, and had just seated himself at his desk, when Janet, without announcing herself, burst into the room; and Bridget, dissolved in hysterical tears, with her apron to her eyes, appeared behind the senior domestic.

"Please, sir," said Janet, driven by excitement much beyond her usual pace of speaking, and becoming unintentionally a little less respectful than usual, "please, sir, that 'ere young man must go out of this here house; or else no respectable young 'ooman can't stop here; no, indeed, sir; and we be sorry to trouble you, Dr. Thorne; so we be."

"What young man? Sir Louis?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, no! he abides mostly in bed, and don't do nothing amiss; least way not to us. 'Tan't him, sir; but his man."

"Man!" sobbed Bridget from behind. "He an't

no man, nor nothing like a man. If Tummas had been here, he would n't have dared; so he would n't." Thomas was the groom, and, if all Greshamsbury reports were true, it was probable, that on some happy, future day, Thomas and Bridget would become one flesh and one bone.

"Please, sir," continued Janet, "there 'll be bad work here if that 'ere young man does n't quit this here house this very night, and I 'm sorry to trouble you, doctor; and so I am. But Tom, he be given to fight a'most for nothin'. He 's out now; but if that there young man be's here when Tom comes home, Tom will be punching his head; I know he will."

"He would n't stand by and see a poor girl put upon; no more he would n't," said Bridget through her tears.

After many futile inquiries, the doctor ascertained that Mr. Jonah had expressed some admiration for Bridget's youthful charms, and had, in the absence of Janet, thrown himself at the lady's feet in a manner which had not been altogether pleasing to her. She had defended herself stoutly and loudly, and in the middle of the row Janet had come among them.

"And where is he now?" said the doctor.

"Why, sir," said Janet, "the poor girl was so put about that she did give him one touch across the face with the rolling-pin, and he be all bloody now, in the back kitchen." At hearing this achievement of hers thus spoken of, Bridget sobbed more hysterically than ever; but the doctor, looking at her arm as she held her apron to her face, thought in his heart that Joe must have had so much the worst of it, that there could be no possible need for the interference of Thomas the groom.

And such turned out to be the case. The bridge of Joe's nose was broken; and the doctor had to set it for him in a little bedroom at the village public-house, Bridget having positively refused to go to bed in the same house with so dreadful a character.

"Quiet now, or I 'll be serving thee the same way; thee see I 've found the trick of it." The doctor could not but hear so much as he made his way into his own house by the back door, after finishing his surgical operation. Bridget was recounting to her champion the fracas that had occurred; and he, as was so natural, was expressing his admiration at her valour.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR LOUIS GOES OUT TO DINNER.

THE next day Joe did not make his appearance, and Sir Louis, with many execrations, was driven to the terrible necessity of dressing himself. Then came an unexpected difficulty. How were they to get up to the house? Walking out to dinner, though it was merely through the village and up the avenue, seemed to Sir Louis to be a thing impossible. Indeed, he was not well able to walk at all, and positively declared that he should never be able to make his way over the gravel in pumps. His mother would not have thought half as much of walking from Boxall Hill to Greshamsbury and back again. At last, the one village fly was sent for, and the matter was arranged.

When they reached the house, it was easy to see that there was some unwonted bustle. In the drawing-room there was no one but Mr. Mortimer Gagebee, who introduced himself to them both. Sir Louis, who knew that he was only an attorney, did not take much notice of him, but the doctor entered into conversation.

"Have you heard that Mr. Gresham has come home?" said Mr. Gagebee.

"Mr. Gresham! I did not know that he had been away."

"Mr. Gresham, junior, I mean." No, indeed; the

doctor had not heard. Frank had returned unexpectedly just before dinner, and he was now undergoing his father's smiles, his mother's embraces, and his sisters' questions.

"Quite unexpectedly," said Mr. Gagebee. "I don't know what has brought him back before his time. I suppose he found London too hot."

"Deuced hot," said the baronet. "I found it so, at least. I don't know what keeps men in London when it 's so hot;—except those fellows who have business to do: they 're paid for it."

Mr. Mortimer Gagebee looked at him. He was managing an estate which owed Sir Louis an enormous sum of money, and, therefore, he could not afford to despise the baronet; but he thought to himself, what a very abject fellow the man would be if he were not a baronet, and had not a large fortune!

And then the squire came in. His broad, honest face was covered with a smile when he saw the doctor.

"Thorne," he said, almost in a whisper, "you 're the best fellow breathing. I have hardly deserved this." The doctor, as he took his old friend's hand, could not but be glad that he had followed Mary's counsel.

"So Frank has come home?"

"Oh, yes; quite unexpectedly! He was to have stayed a week longer in London. You would hardly know him if you met him. Sir Louis, I beg your pardon." And the squire went up to his other guest, who had remained somewhat sullenly standing in one corner of the room. He was the man of highest rank present, or to be present, and he expected to be treated as such.

"I am happy to have the pleasure of making your

acquaintance, Mr. Gresham," said the baronet, intending to be very courteous. "Though we have not met before, I very often see your name in my accounts,—ha! ha! ha!" and Sir Louis laughed as though he had said something very good.

The meeting between Lady Arabella and the doctor was rather distressing to the former; but she managed to get over it. She shook hands with him graciously, and said that it was a fine day. The doctor said that it was fine, only perhaps a little rainy. And then they went into different parts of the room.

When Frank came in, the doctor hardly did know him. His hair was darker than it had been, and so was his complexion; but his chief disguise was in a long silken beard, which hung down over his cravat. The doctor had hitherto not been much in favour of long beards, but he could not deny that Frank looked very well with the appendage.

"Oh, doctor, I am so delighted to find you here!" said he, coming up to him; "so very, very glad:" and, taking the doctor's arm, he led him away into a window, where they were alone. "And how is Mary?" said he, almost in a whisper. "Oh, I wish she were here! But, doctor, it shall all come in time. But tell me, doctor, there is no news about her, is there?"

"News;—what news?"

"Oh, well; no news is good news: you will give her my love, won't you?"

The doctor said that he would. What else could he say? It appeared quite clear to him that some of Mary's fears were groundless.

Frank was again very much altered. It has been said, that though he was a boy at twenty-one, he was

a man at twenty-two. But now, at twenty-three, he appeared to be almost a man of the world. His manners were easy, his voice under his control, and words were at his command. He was no longer either shy or noisy; but, perhaps, was open to the charge of seeming, at least, to be too conscious of his own merits. He was, indeed, very handsome. Tall, manly, and powerfully built, his form was such as women's eyes have ever loved to look upon. "Ah, if he would but marry money!" said Lady Arabella to herself, taken up by a mother's natural admiration for her son. His sisters clung round him before dinner, all talking to him at once. How proud a family of girls are of one big, tall, burly brother!

"You don't mean to tell me, Frank, that you are going to eat soup with that beard?" said the squire, when they were seated round the table. He had not ceased to rally his son as to this patriarchal adornment; but, nevertheless, any one could have seen, with half an eye, that he was as proud of it as the others.

"Don't I, sir? All I require is a relay of napkins for every course:" and he went to work, covering it with every spoonful, as men with beards always do.

"Well, if you like it!" said the squire, shrugging his shoulders.

"But I do like it," said Frank.

"Oh, papa, you would n't have him cut if off?" said one of the twins. "It is so handsome."

"I should like to work it into a chair-back instead of floss-silk," said the other twin.

"Thank'ee, Sophy. I 'll remember you for that."

"Does n't it look nice, and grand, and patriarchal?" said Beatrice, turning to her neighbour.

"Patriarchal, certainly," said Mr. Oriel. "I should grow one myself if I had not the fear of the archbishop before my eyes."

This was all very well for the squire, and Lady Arabella, and the girls. They were all delighted to praise Frank, and talk about him. Neither did it come amiss to Mr. Oriel and the doctor, who had both a personal interest in the young hero. But Sir Louis did not like it at all. He was the only baronet in the room, and yet nobody took any notice of him. He was seated in the post of honour, next to Lady Arabella; but even Lady Arabella seemed to think more of her own son than of him. Seeing how he was ill-used he meditated revenge; but not the less did it behove him to make some effort to attract attention.

"Was your ladyship long in London, this season?" said he.

Lady Arabella had not been in London at all this year, and it was a sore subject with her. "No," said she very graciously; "circumstances have kept us at home."

Sir Louis only understood one description of "circumstances." Circumstances, in his idea, meant the want of money, and he immediately took Lady Arabella's speech as a confession of poverty.

"Ah, indeed! I am very sorry for that. That must be very distressing to a person like your ladyship. But things are mending, perhaps?"

Lady Arabella did not in the least understand him. "Mending!" she said, in her peculiar tone of aristocratic indifference; and then turned to Mr. Gagebee, who was on the other side of her.

Sir Louis was not going to stand this. He was the

first man in the room, and he knew his own importance. It was not to be borne that Lady Arabella should turn to talk to a dirty attorney, and leave him, a baronet, to eat his dinner without notice. If nothing else would move her, he would let her know who was the real owner of the Greshamsbury title-deeds. "I think I saw your ladyship out to-day, taking a ride." Lady Arabella had driven through the village in her pony-chair.

"I never ride," said she, turning her head for one moment from Mr. Gagebee.

"In the one-horse carriage, I mean, my lady. I was delighted with the way you whipped him up round the corner."

Whipped him up round the corner! Lady Arabella could make no answer to this; so she went on talking to Mr. Gagebee. Sir Louis, repulsed, but not vanquished,—resolved not to be vanquished by any Lady Arabella,—turned his attention to his plate for a minute or two, and then recommenced. "The honour of a glass of wine with you, Lady Arabella," said he.

"I never take wine at dinner," said Lady Arabella.

The man was becoming intolerable to her, and she was beginning to fear that it would be necessary for her to fly the room, to get rid of him.

The baronet was again silent for a moment; but he was determined not to be put down. "This is a nice-looking country about here," said he.

"Yes; very nice," said Mr. Gagebee, endeavouring to relieve the lady of the mansion.

"I hardly know which I like best; this, or my own place at Boxall Hill. You have the advantage here in trees, and those sort of things. But, as to the house,

why, my box there is very comfortable; very. You 'd hardly know the place now, Lady Arabella, if you have n't seen it since my governor bought it. How much do you think he spent about the house and grounds, pineries included, you know, and those sort of things?"

Lady Arabella shook her head.

"Now guess, my lady," said he. But it was not to be supposed that Lady Arabella should guess on such a subject.

"I never guess," said she, with a look of ineffable disgust.

"What do you say, Mr. Gagebee?"

"Perhaps a hundred thousand pounds."

"What! for a house? You can't know much about money, nor yet about building, I think, Mr. Gagebee."

"Not much," said Mr. Gagebee, "as to such magnificent places as Boxall Hill."

"Well, my lady, if you won't guess, I 'll tell you. It cost twenty-two thousand four hundred and nineteen pounds four shillings and eightpence. I 've all the accounts exact. Now, that 's a tidy lot of money for a house for a man to live in."

Sir Louis spoke this in a loud tone, which at least commanded the attention of the table. Lady Arabella, vanquished, bowed her head, and said that it was a large sum; Mr. Gagebee went on sedulously eating his dinner; the squire was struck momentarily dumb in the middle of a long chat with the doctor; even Mr. Oriel ceased to whisper; and the girls opened their eyes with astonishment. Before the end of his speech, Sir Louis' voice had become very loud.

"Yes, indeed," said Frank; "a very tidy lot of

money. I 'd have generously dropped the four and eightpence if I 'd been the architect."

"It was n't all one bill; but that 's the tot. I can show the bills:" and Sir Louis, well pleased with his triumph, swallowed a glass of wine.

Almost immediately after the cloth was removed, Lady Arabella escaped, and the gentlemen clustered together. Sir Louis found himself next to Mr. Oriel, and began to make himself agreeable. "A very nice girl, Miss Beatrice; very nice." Now Mr. Oriel was a modest man, and, when thus addressed as to his future wife, found it difficult to make any reply. "You parsons always have your own luck," said Sir Louis. "You get all the beauty, and generally all the money, too. Not much of the latter in this case, though, —eh?"

Mr. Oriel was dumfounded. He had never said a word to any creature as to Beatrice's dowry; and when Mr. Gresham had told him, with sorrow, that his daughter's portion must be small, he had at once passed away from the subject as one that was hardly fit for conversation, even between him and his future father-in-law. Now he was abruptly questioned on the subject by a man he had never before seen in his life! Of course, he could make no answer.

"The squire has muddled his matters most uncommonly," continued Sir Louis, filling his glass for the second time before he passed the bottle. "What do you suppose now he owes me, alone; just at one lump, you know?" Mr. Oriel had nothing for it but to run. He could make no answer, nor would he sit there to hear tidings as to Mr. Gresham's embarrassments. So he fairly retreated, without having said one

word to his neighbour, finding such discretion to be the only kind of valour left to him.

"What, Oriel! off already?" said the squire. "Anything the matter?"

"Oh, no; nothing particular. I 'm not just, quite;—I think I 'll go out for a few minutes."

"See what it is to be in love," said the squire, half whispering to Dr. Thorne. "You 're not in the same way, I hope?"

Sir Louis then shifted his seat again, and found himself next to Frank. Mr. Gagebee was opposite to him, and the doctor opposite to Frank.

"Parson seems peekish, I think," said the baronet.

"Peekish?" said the squire, inquisitively.

"Rather down on his luck. He 's decently well off himself, is n't he?" There was another pause, and nobody seemed inclined to answer the question. "I mean he 's got something more than his bare living."

"Oh, yes," said Frank, laughing. "He 's got what will buy him bread and cheese when the Rads shut up the church;—unless, indeed, they shut up the funds too."

"Ah, there 's nothing like land," said Sir Louis; "nothing like the dirty acres; is there, squire?"

"Land is a very good investment, certainly," said Mr. Gresham.

"The best going," said the other, who was now, as people say when they mean to be good-natured, slightly under the influence of liquor. "The best going;—eh, Gagebee?" Mr. Gagebee gathered himself up, and turned away his head, looking out of the window. "You lawyers never like to give an opinion without money, ha! ha! ha! Do they, Mr. Gresham?

You and I have had to pay for plenty of them, and will have to pay for plenty more before they let us alone."

Here Mr. Gagebee got up, and followed Mr. Oriel out of the room. He was not, of course, on such intimate terms in the house as was Mr. Oriel; but he hoped to be forgiven by the ladies in consequence of the severity of the miseries to which he was subjected. He and Mr. Oriel were soon to be seen through the dining-room window, walking about the grounds with the two eldest Miss Greshams. And Patience Oriel, who had also been of the party, was also to be seen with the twins. Frank looked at his father with almost a malicious smile, and began to think that he too might be better employed out among the walks. Did he think then of a former summer evening, when he had half broken Mary's heart by walking there too lovingly with Patience Oriel?

Sir Louis, if he continued his brilliant career of success, would soon be left the cock of the walk. The squire, to be sure, could not bolt, nor could the doctor very well; but they might be equally vanquished, remaining there in their chairs. Dr. Thorne, during all this time, was sitting with tingling ears. Indeed, it may be said that his whole body tingled. He was in a manner responsible for this horrid scene. But what could he do to stop it? He could not take Sir Louis up bodily and carry him away. One idea did occur to him. The fly had been ordered for ten o'clock. He could rush out and send for it instantly.

"You 're not going to leave me?" said the squire, in a voice of horror, as he saw the doctor rising from his chair.

"Oh, no, no, no," said the doctor; and then he whispered the purpose of his mission. "I will be back in two minutes." The doctor would have given twenty pounds to have closed the scene at once; but he was not the man to desert his friend in such a strait as that.

"He 's a well-meaning fellow, is the doctor," said Sir Louis, when his guardian was out of the room, "very, but he 's not up to trap,—not at all."

"Up to trap;—well, I should say he was; that is, if I know what trap means," said Frank.

"Ah, but that 's just the ticket. Do you know? Now I say Dr. Thorne 's not a man of the world."

"He 's about the best man I know, or ever heard of," said the squire. "And if any man ever had a good friend, you have got one in him;—and so have I:" and the squire silently drank the doctor's health.

"All very true, I dare say; but yet he 's not up to trap. Now look here, squire——"

"If you don't mind, sir," said Frank, "I 've got something very particular—perhaps, however——" Frank made a move as though he were going. "Stay till Thorne returns, Frank." Frank did stay till Thorne returned, and then escaped. "Excuse me, doctor," said he, "but I 've something very particular to say; I 'll explain to-morrow," and then the three were left alone.

Sir Louis was now becoming almost drunk, and was knocking his words together. The squire had already attempted to stop the bottle: but the baronet had contrived to get hold of a modicum of Madeira, and there was no preventing him from helping himself; at least, none at that moment.

"As we were saying about lawyers," continued Sir

Louis. "Let 's see, what were we saying? Why, squire, it 's just here. Those fellows will fleece us both if we don't mind what we are after."

"Never mind about lawyers now," said Dr. Thorne, angrily.

"Ah, but I do mind; most particularly. That 's all very well for you, doctor; you 've nothing to lose. You 've no great stake in the matter. Why, now, what sum of money of mine do you think those d—— doctors are handling?"

"D—— doctors!" said the squire in a tone of dismay.

"Lawyers, I mean, of course. Why, now, Gresham; we 're all tiled now, you see; your down in my books, I take it, for pretty near a hundred thousand pounds.

"Hold your tongue, sir!" said the doctor, getting up.

"Hold my tongue!" said Sir Louis.

"Sir Louis Scatcherd," said the squire, slowly rising from his chair, "we will not, if you please, talk about business at the present moment. Perhaps we had better go to the ladies." This latter proposition had certainly not come from the squire's heart: going to the ladies was the very last thing for which Sir Louis was now fit. But the squire had said it as being the only recognised formal way he could think of for breaking up the symposium.

"Oh, very well," hiccuped the baronet, "I 'm always ready for the ladies," and he stretched out his hand to the decanter to get a last glass of Madeira.

"No," said the doctor, rising stoutly, and speaking with a determined voice. "No; you will have no more wine;" and he took the decanter from him.

"What 's all this about?" said Sir Louis, with a drunken laugh.

"Of course he cannot go into the drawing-room, Mr. Gresham. If you will leave him here with me, I will stay with him till the fly comes. Pray tell Lady Arabella from me how sorry I am that this has occurred."

"Lady Arabella! why, what 's the matter with her?" said Sir Louis.

The squire would not leave his friend, and they sat together till the fly came. It was not long, for the doctor had despatched his messenger with much haste.

"I am so heartily ashamed of myself," said the doctor, almost with tears.

The squire took him by the hand, affectionately. "I 've seen a tipsy man before to-night," said he.

"Yes," said the doctor, "and so have I, but——" He did not express the rest of his thoughts.

CHAPTER XIII.

WILL HE COME AGAIN?

Long before the doctor returned home after the little dinner-party above described Mary had learnt that Frank was already at Greshamsbury. She had heard nothing of him or from him, not a word, nothing in the shape of a message, for twelve months; and at her age twelve months is a long period. Would he come and see her in spite of his mother? Would he send her any tidings of his return, or notice her in any way? If he did not, what would she do? And if he did, what then would she do? It was so hard to resolve; so hard to be deserted; and so hard to dare to wish that she might not be deserted! She continued to say to herself, that it would be better that they should be strangers; and she could hardly keep herself from tears in the fear that they might be so. What chance could there be that he should care for her, after an absence spent in travelling over the world? No; she would forget that affair of his hand; and then, immediately after having so determined, she would confess to herself that it was a thing not to be forgotten, impossible of oblivion.

On her uncle's return she would hear some word about him; and so she sat alone, with a book before her, of which she could not read a line. She expected

them about eleven, and was, therefore, rather surprised when the fly stopped at the door before nine.

She immediately heard her uncle's voice, loud and angry, calling for Thomas. Both Thomas and Bridget were unfortunately out, being, at this moment, forgetful of all sublunary cares, and seated in happiness under a beech-tree in the park. Janet flew to the little gate, and there found Sir Louis insisting that he would be taken at once to his own mansion at Boxall Hill, and positively swearing that he would no longer submit to the insult of the doctor's surveillance.

In the absence of Thomas, the doctor was forced to apply for assistance to the driver of the fly. Between them the baronet was dragged out of the vehicle; the windows suffered much, and the doctor's hat also. In this way, he was taken upstairs, and was at last put to bed, Janet assisting; nor did the doctor leave the room till his guest was asleep. Then he went into the drawing-room to Mary. It may easily be conceived that he was hardly in a humour to talk much about Frank Gresham.

"What am I to do with him?" said he, almost in tears. "What am I to do with him?"

"Can you not send him to Boxall Hill?" asked Mary.

"Yes; to kill himself there! But it is no matter. He will kill himself somewhere. Oh! what that family have done for me!" And then suddenly remembering a portion of their doings, he took Mary in his arms, and kissed and blessed her; and declared that, in spite of all this, he was a happy man.

There was no word about Frank that night. The next morning the doctor found Sir Louis very weak

and begging for stimulants. He was worse than weak; he was in such a state of wretched misery and mental prostration; so low in heart, in such collapse of energy and spirit, that Dr. Thorne thought it prudent to remove his razors from his reach.

"For God's sake do let me have a little chasse-café; I 'm always used to it; ask Joe if I 'm not? You don't want to kill me, do you?" And the baronet cried piteously, like a child, and, when the doctor left him for the breakfast-table, abjectly implored Janet to get him some curaçoa, which he knew was in one of his portmanteaus. Janet, however, was true to her master.

The doctor did give him some wine; and then, having left strict orders as to his treatment,—Bridget and Thomas being now both in the house,—went forth to some of his too much neglected patients.

Then Mary was again alone, and her mind flew away to her lover. How should she be able to compose herself when she should first see him? See him she must. People cannot live in the same village without meeting. If she passed him at the church door, as she so often passed Lady Arabella, what should she do? Lady Arabella always smiled a peculiar, little, bitter smile, and this, with half a nod of recognition, carried off the meeting. Should she try the bitter smile, the half-nod with Frank? Alas! she knew it was not in her to be so much mistress of her own heart's blood.

As she thus thought, she stood at the drawing-room window, looking out into her garden; and, as she leant against the sill, her head was surrounded by the sweet creepers. "At any rate, he won't come here,"

she said; and so with a deep sigh, she turned from the window into the room.

There he was, Frank Gresham himself, standing there in her immediate presence, beautiful as Apollo. Her next thought was how she might escape from out of his arms. How it happened that she had fallen into them, she never knew.

"Mary! my own, own love! my own one! sweetest! dearest! best! Mary! dear Mary! have you not a word to say to me?"

No; she had not a word, though her life had depended on it. The exertion necessary for not crying was quite enough for her. This, then, was the bitter smile and the half-nod that was to pass between them; this was the manner in which estrangement was to grow into indifference; this was the mode of meeting by which she was to prove that she was mistress of her conduct, if not her heart! There he held her close bound to his breast, and she could only protect her face, and that all ineffectually, with her hands. "He loves another," Beatrice had said. "At any rate, he will not love me," her own heart had said, also. Here was now the answer.

"You know you cannot marry him," Beatrice had said, also. Ah! if that really were so, was not this embrace deplorable for them both? And yet how could she not be happy? She endeavoured to repel him; but with what a weak endeavour! Her pride had been wounded to the core, not by Lady Arabella's scorn, but by the conviction which had grown on her that though she had given her own heart absolutely away, had parted with it wholly and for ever, she had received nothing in return. The world, her world,

would know that she had loved, and loved in vain. But here now was the loved one at her feet. The first moment that his enforced banishment was over, had brought him there. How could she not be happy?

They all said that she could not marry him. Well, perhaps it might be so; nay, when she thought of it, must not that edict too probably be true? But if so, it would not be his fault. He was true to her, and that satisfied her pride. He had taken from her, by surprise, a confession of her love. She had often regretted her weakness in allowing him to do so; but she could not regret it now. She could endure to suffer. Nay, it would not be suffering while he suffered with her.

"Not one word, Mary? Then, after all my dreams, after all my patience, you do not love me at last?"

Oh, Frank! notwithstanding what has been said in thy praise, what a fool thou art! Was any word necessary? Had not her heart beat against thine? Had she not borne thy caresses? Had there been one touch of anger when she warded off thy threatened kisses? Bridget, in the kitchen, when Jonah became amorous, smashed his nose with the rolling-pin. But when Thomas sinned, perhaps as deeply, she only talked of doing so. Miss Thorne, in the drawing-room, had she needed self-protection, could doubtless have found the means, though the process would probably have been less violent.

At last Mary succeeded in her efforts at enfranchisement, and she and Frank stood at some little distance from each other. She could not but marvel at him. That long soft beard, which just now had been so

close to her face, was all new; his whole look was altered; his mien, his gait, and very voice were not the same. Was this, indeed, the very Frank who had chattered of his boyish love, two years since, in the gardens at Greshamsbury?

"Not one word of welcome, Mary?"

"Indeed, Mr. Gresham, you are welcome home."

"Mr. Gresham! Tell me, Mary,—tell me, at once,—has anything happened? I could not ask up there."

"Frank," she said, and then stopped; not being able at the moment to get any further.

"Speak to me honestly, Mary; honestly and bravely. I offered you my hand once before; there it is again. Will you take it?"

She looked wistfully up in his eyes; she would fain have taken it. But though a girl may be honest in such a case, it is so hard for her to be brave.

He still held out his hand. "Mary," said he, "if you can value it, it shall be yours through good fortune or ill fortune. There may be difficulties; but if you can love me, we will get over them. I am a free man; free to do as I please with myself, except so far as I am bound to you. There is my hand. Will you have it?" And then he, too, looked into her eyes, and waited composedly, as though determined to have an answer.

She slowly raised her hand, and, as she did so, her eyes fell to the ground. It then dropped again, and was again raised; and, at last, her light tapering fingers rested on his broad open palm. They were soon clutched, and the whole hand brought absolutely into his grasp. "There, now you are my own!" he said, "and none of them shall part us; my own Mary, my own wife!"

"Oh, Frank, is not this imprudent? Is it not wrong?"

"Imprudent! I am sick of prudence. I hate prudence. And as for wrong,—no. I say it is not wrong; certainly not wrong if we love each other. And you do love me, Mary,—eh? You do! don't you?"

He would not excuse her, or allow her to escape from saying it in so many words; and when the words came at last, they came freely. "Yes, Frank, I do love you. If that were all you would have no cause for fear."

"And I will have no cause for fear."

"Ah; but your father, Frank, and my uncle! I can never bring myself to do anything that shall bring either of them to sorrow."

Frank, of course, ran through all his arguments. He would go into a profession, or take a farm and live on it. He would wait;—that is, for a few months. "A few months, Frank!" said Mary. "Well, perhaps six." "Oh, Frank!" But Frank would not be stopped. He would do anything that his father might ask him. Anything but the one thing. He would not give up the wife he had chosen. It would not be reasonable, or proper, or righteous that he should be asked to do so; and here he mounted a somewhat high horse. Mary had no arguments which she could bring from her heart to offer in opposition to all this. She could only leave her hand in his, and feel that she was happier than she had been at any time since the day of that donkey ride at Boxall Hill.

"But, Mary," continued he, becoming very grave and serious, "we must be true to each other, and

firm in this. Nothing that any of them can say shall drive me from my purpose. Will you say as much?"

Her hand was still in his, and so she stood, thinking for a moment before she answered him. But she could not do less for him than he was willing to do for her. "Yes," said she,—said in a very low voice, and with a manner perfectly quiet,—"I will be firm. Nothing that they can say shall shake me. But, Frank, it cannot be soon." Nothing further occurred in this interview which needs recording. Frank had been three times told by Mary that he had better go before he did go; and, at last, she was obliged to take the matter into her own hands, and lead him to the door.

"You are in a great hurry to get rid of me," said he.

"You have been here two hours, and you must go now; what will they all think?"

"Who cares what they think? Let them think the truth;—that after a year's absence, I have much to say to you." However, at last, he did go, and Mary was left alone.

Frank, although he had been so slow to move, had a thousand other things to do, and went about them at once. He was very much in love, no doubt; but that did not interfere with his interest in other pursuits. In the first place he had to see Harry Baker and Harry Baker's stud. Harry had been specially charged to look after the black horse during Frank's absence, and the holiday doings of that valuable animal had to be inquired into. Then the kennel of the hounds had to be visited, and,—as a matter of second-rate importance, the master. This could not be done on the same day; but a plan for doing so must be concocted with Harry,—and then there were two young pointer pups.

Frank, when he left his betrothed, went about these things quite as vehemently as though he were not in love at all; quite as vehemently as though he had said nothing as to going into some profession which must necessarily separate him from horses and dogs. But Mary sat there at her window, thinking of her love, and thinking of nothing else. It was all in all to her now. She had pledged herself not to be shaken from her troth by anything, by any person; and it would behove her to be true to this pledge; true to it, though all the Greshams but one should oppose her with all their power; true to it, even though her own uncle should oppose her.

And how could she have done any other than so pledged herself, invoked to it as she had been? How could she do less for him than he was so anxious to do for her? They would talk to her of maiden delicacy, and tell her that she had put a stain upon that snow-white coat of proof, in confessing her love for one whose friends were unwilling to receive her. Let them so talk. Honour, honesty, and truth, outspoken truth, self-denying truth, and fealty from man to man, are worth more than maiden delicacy;—more, at any rate, than the talk of it. It was not for herself that this pledge had been made. She knew her position, and the difficulties of it; she knew also the value of it. He had much to offer, much to give. She had nothing but herself. He had name, and old repute, family, honour, and what eventually would at least be wealth to her. She was nameless, fameless, portionless. He had come there with all his ardour, with the impulse of his character, and asked for her love. It was already his own. He had then demanded her troth,

and she acknowledged that he had a right to demand it. She would be his if ever it should be in his power to take her.

But there let the bargain end. She would always remember, that though it was in her power to keep her pledge, it might too probably not be in his power to keep his. That doctrine, laid down so imperatively by the great authorities of Greshamsbury, that edict, which demanded that Frank should marry money, had come home also to her with a certain force. It would be sad that the fame of Greshamsbury should perish, and that the glory should depart from the old house. It might be, that Frank also should perceive that he must marry money. It would be a pity that he had not seen it sooner;—but she, at any rate, would not complain.

And so she stood, leaning on the open window, with her book unnoticed lying beside her. The sun had been in the mid-sky when Frank had left her, but its rays were beginning to stream into the room from the west before she moved from her position. Her first thought in the morning had been this: Would he come to see her? Her last now was more soothing to her, less full of absolute fear: Would it be right that he should come again?

The first sounds she heard were the footsteps of her uncle, as he came up to the drawing-room, three steps at a time. His step was always heavy; but when he was disturbed in spirit, it was slow; when merely fatigued in body by ordinary work, it was quick. "What a broiling day!" he said, and he threw himself into a chair. "For mercy's sake give me something to drink." Now the doctor was a great man for sum-

mer drinks. In his house, lemonade, currant-juice, orange-mixtures, and raspberry-vinegar were used by the quart. He frequently disapproved of these things for his patients, as being apt to disarrange the digestion; but he consumed enough himself to throw a large family into such difficulties. "Ha—a!" he ejaculated, after a draught; "I 'm better now. Well, what 's the news?"

"You 've been out, uncle; you ought to have the news. How 's Mrs. Green?"

"Really as bad as ennui and solitude can make her."

"And Mrs. Oaklerath?"

"She 's getting better, because she has ten children to look after, and twins to suckle. What has he been doing?" and the doctor pointed towards the room occupied by Sir Louis.

Mary's conscience struck her that she had not even asked. She had hardly remembered, during the whole day, that the baronet was in the house. "I do not think he has been doing much," she said. "Janet has been with him all day."

"Has he been drinking?"

"Upon my word, I don't know, uncle. I think not, for Janet has been with him. But, uncle——"

"Well, dear;—but just give me a little more of that tipple."

Mary prepared the tumbler, and, as she handed it to him, she said, "Frank Gresham has been here to-day."

The doctor swallowed his draught, and put down the glass before he made any reply, and even then he said but little. "Oh! Frank Gresham."

"Yes, uncle."

"You thought him looking pretty well?"

"Yes, uncle; he was very well, I believe."

Dr. Thorne had nothing more to say, so he got up and went to his patient in the next room. "If he disapproves of it, why does he not say so?" said Mary to herself. "Why does he not advise me?" But it was not so easy to give advice while Sir Louis Scatcherd was lying there in that state.

CHAPTER XIV.

SIR LOUIS LEAVES GRESHAMSBURY.

JANET had been sedulous in her attentions to Sir Louis, and had not troubled her mistress; but she had not had an easy time of it. Her orders had been, that either she or Thomas should remain in the room the whole day, and those orders had been obeyed. Immediately after breakfast, the baronet had inquired after his own servant. "His confounded nose must be right by this time, I suppose?"

"It was very bad, Sir Louis," said the old woman, who imagined that it might be difficult to induce Jonah to come into the house again.

"A man in such a place as his has no business to be laid up," said the master, with a whine. "I 'll see and get a man who won't break his nose." Thomas was sent to the inn three or four times, but in vain. The man was sitting up, well enough, in the tap-room; but the middle of his face was covered with streaks of plaster, and he could not bring himself to expose his wounds before his conqueror.

Sir Louis began by ordering the woman to bring him chasse-café. She offered him coffee, as much as he would, but no chasse. "A glass of port wine," she said, "at twelve o'clock, and another at three had been ordered for him."

"I don't care a —— for the orders," said Sir Louis. "Send me my own man." The man was again sent for; but would not come. "There 's a bottle of stuff that I take, in that portmanteau, in the left-hand corner;—just hand it to me." But Janet was not to be done. She would give him no stuff, except what the doctor had ordered, till the doctor came back. The doctor would then, no doubt, give him anything that was proper.

Sir Louis swore a good deal, and stormed as much as he could. He drank, however, his two glasses of wine, and he got no more. Once or twice he essayed to get out of bed and dress; but, at every effort, he found that he could not do it without Joe. And there he was, still under the clothes when the doctor returned. "I 'll tell you what it is," said he, as soon as his guardian entered the room, "I 'm not going to be made a prisoner of here."

"A prisoner! no, surely not."

"It seems very much like it at present. Your servant here, that old woman, takes it upon her to say she 'll do nothing without your orders."

"Well; she 's right there."

"Right! I don't know what you call right; but I won't stand it. You are not going to make a child of me, Dr. Thorne; so you need not think it."

And then there was a long quarrel between them, and but an indifferent reconciliation. The baronet said that he would go to Boxall Hill, and was vehement in his intention to do so because the doctor opposed it. He had not, however, as yet ferreted out the squire, or given a bit of his mind to Mr. Gagebee, and it behoved him to do this before he took himself

off to his own country mansion. He ended, therefore, by deciding to go on the next day but one. "Let it be so, if you are well enough," said the doctor.

"Well enough!" said the other with a sneer. "There 's nothing to make me ill that I know of. It certainly won't be drinking too much here."

On the next day, Sir Louis was in a different mood, and in one more distressing for the doctor to bear. His compelled abstinence from intemperate drinking had, no doubt, been good for him; but his mind had so much sunk under the pain of the privation, that his state was piteous to behold. He had cried for his servant, as a child cries for its nurse, till at last the doctor, moved to pity, had himself gone out and brought the man in from the public-house. But when he did come Joe was of but little service to his master, as he was altogether prevented from bringing him either wine or spirits; and when he searched for the liqueur-case, he found that even that had been carried away. "I believe you want me to die," he said, as the doctor, sitting by his bedside, was trying, for the hundredth time, to make him understand that he had but one chance of living.

The doctor was not the least irritated. It would have been as wise to be irritated by the want of reason in a dog. "I am doing what I can to save your life," he said calmly; "but, as you said just now, I have no power over you. As long as you remain in my house, you certainly shall not have the means of destroying yourself. You will be very wise to stay here for a week or ten days: a week or ten days of healthy living might, perhaps, bring you round."

Sir Louis again declared that the doctor wished him

to die, and spoke even of sending for his attorney. Finney, to come to Greshamsbury to look after him. "Send for him if you choose," said the doctor. "His coming will cost you three or four pounds, but can do no other harm."

"And I will send for Fillgrave," threatened the baronet. "I 'm not going to die here like a dog."

It was certainly hard upon Dr. Thorne that he should be obliged to entertain such a guest in his house;—to entertain him, and foster him, and care for him, almost as though he were a son. But he had no alternative. He had accepted the charge from Sir Roger, and he must go through with it. His conscience, moreover, allowed him no rest in this matter. It harassed him day and night, driving him on sometimes to great wretchedness. He could not love this incubus that was on his shoulders; he could not do other than be very far from loving him. Of what use or value was he to any one? What could the world make of him that would be good, or he of the world? Was not an early death his certain fate? The earlier it might be, would it not be the better?

Were he to linger on yet for two years longer,—and such a space of life was possible for him,—how great would be the mischief that he might do; nay, certainly would do! Farewell then to all hopes for Greshamsbury, as far as Mary was concerned. Farewell then to that dear scheme which lay deep in the doctor's heart, that hope that he might, in his niece's name, give back to the son the lost property of the father. And might not one year,—six months be as fatal? Frank, they all said, must marry money; and even he,—he the doctor himself, much as he despised the

idea for money's sake,—even he could not but confess that Frank, as the heir to an old but grievously embarrassed property, had no right to marry, at his early age, a girl without a shilling. Mary, his niece, his own child, would probably be the heiress of this immense wealth; but he could not tell this to Frank; no, nor to Frank's father while Sir Louis was yet alive. What, if by so doing he should achieve this marriage for his niece, and that then Sir Louis should live to dispose of his own? How then would he face the anger of Lady Arabella?

"I will never hanker after a dead man's shoes,—neither for myself nor for another," he had said to himself a hundred times; and as often did he accuse himself of doing so. One path, however, was plainly open before him. He would keep his peace as to the will; and would use such efforts as he might use for a son of his own loins to preserve the life that was so valueless. His wishes, his hopes, his thoughts, he could not control; but his conduct was at his own disposal.

"I say, doctor, you don't really think I 'm going to die?" Sir Louis said, when Dr. Thorne again visited him.

"I don't think at all. I am sure you will kill yourself if you continue to live as you have lately done."

"But suppose I go all right for a while, and live,—live just as you tell me, you know?"

"All of us are in God's hands, Sir Louis. By so doing you will, at any rate, give yourself the best chance."

"Best chance? Why, d——n, doctor! there are fellows have done ten times worse than I, and they are

not going to kick. Come, now, I know you are trying to frighten me; ain't you, now?"

"I am trying to do the best I can for you."

"It 's very hard on a fellow like me. I have nobody to say a kind word to me; no, not one." And Sir Louis, in his wretchedness, began to weep. "Come, doctor; if you 'll put me once more on my legs, I 'll let you draw on the estate for five hundred pounds; by G——, I will."

The doctor went away to his dinner, and the baronet also had his in bed. He could not eat much, but he was allowed two glasses of wine, and also a little brandy in his coffee. This somewhat invigorated him, and when Dr. Thorne again went to him, in the evening, he did not find him so utterly prostrated in spirit. He had, indeed, made up his mind to a great resolve; and thus unfolded his final scheme for his own reformation. "Doctor," he began again, "I believe you are an honest fellow: I do, indeed." Dr. Thorne could not but thank him for his good opinion.

"You ain't annoyed at what I said this morning, are you?"

The doctor had forgotten the particular annoyance to which Sir Louis alluded; and informed him that his mind might be at rest on any such matter.

"I do believe you 'd be glad to see me well; would n't you, now?"

The doctor assured him that such was in very truth the case.

"Well, now, I 'll tell you what. I 've been thinking about it a great deal to-day; indeed, I have, and I want to do what's right. Might n't I have a little drop more of that stuff, just in a cup of coffee?" The

doctor poured him out a cup of coffee and put about a teaspoonful of brandy in it. Sir Louis took it with a disconsolate face, not having been accustomed to such measures in the use of his favourite beverage. "I do wish to do what 's right; I do, indeed; only, you see, I 'm so lonely. As to those fellows up in London, I don't think that one of them cares a straw about me."

Dr. Thorne was of the same way of thinking, and he said so. He could not but feel some sympathy with the unfortunate man as he thus spoke of his own lot. It was true that he had been thrown on the world without any one to take care of him. "My dear friend, I will do the best I can in every way; I will, indeed. I do believe that your companions in town have been too ready to lead you astray. Drop them and you may yet do well."

"May I though, doctor? Well, I will drop them. There 's Jenkins; he 's the best of them; but even he is always wanting to make money of me. Not but what I 'm up to the best of them in that way."

"You had better leave London, Sir Louis, and change your old mode of life. Go to Boxall Hill for a while; for two or three years or so; live with your mother there and take to farming."

"What! farming?"

"Yes; that 's what all country gentlemen do. Take the land there into your own hand, and occupy your mind upon it."

"Well, doctor, I will,—upon one condition." Dr. Thorne sat still and listened. He had no idea what the condition might be, but he was not prepared to promise acquiescence till he heard it. "You know what I told

you once before," said the baronet. "I don't remember at this moment." "About my getting married, you know." The doctor's brow grew black, and promised no help to the poor wretch. Bad in every way, wretched, selfish, sensual, unfeeling, purse-proud, ignorant as Sir Louis Scatcherd was, still, there was left to him the power of feeling something like sincere love. It may be presumed that he did love Mary Thorne, and that he was at the time earnest in declaring, that if she could be given to him, he would endeavour to live according to her uncle's counsel. It was only a trifle he asked; but, alas! that trifle could not be vouchsafed.

"I should much approve of your getting married, but I do not know how I can help you."

"Of course, I mean to Miss Mary. I do love her; I really do, Dr. Thorne."

"It is quite impossible, Sir Louis; quite. You do my niece much honour; but I am able to answer for her, positively, that such a proposition is quite out of the question."

"Look here now, Dr. Thorne; anything in the way of settlements——"

"I will not hear a word on the subject. You are very welcome to the use of my house as long as it may suit you to remain here; but I must insist that my niece shall not be troubled on this matter."

"Do you mean to say she 's in love with that young Gresham?"

This was too much for the doctor's patience. "Sir Louis," said he, "I can forgive you much for your father's sake. I can also forgive something on the score of your own ill-health. But you ought to know,

you ought by this time to have learnt, that there are some things which a man cannot forgive. I will not talk to you about my niece; and remember this, also, I will not have her troubled by you." And so saying, the doctor left him.

On the next day the baronet was sufficiently recovered to be able to resume his braggadocio airs. He swore at Janet; insisted on being served by his own man; demanded in a loud voice, but in vain, that his liqueur-case should be restored to him; and desired that post-horses might be ready for him on the morrow. On that day he got up and ate his dinner in his bedroom. On the next morning he countermanded the horses, informing the doctor that he did so because he had a little bit of business to transact with Squire Gresham before he left the place! With some difficulty the doctor made him understand that the squire would not see him on business; and it was at last decided, that Mr. Gagebee should be invited to call on him at the doctor's house. This Mr. Gagebee agreed to do, in order to prevent the annoyance of having the baronet up at Greshamsbury.

On this day, the evening before Mr. Gagebee's visit, Sir Louis condescended to come down to dinner. He dined, however, tête à tête with the doctor. Mary was not there, nor was anything said as to her absence. Sir Louis Scatcherd never set eyes upon her again.

He bore himself very arrogantly on that evening, having resumed the airs and would-be dignity which he thought belonged to him as a man of rank and property. In his periods of low spirits, he was abject and humble enough; abject, and fearful of the lamentable destiny which at these moments he believed to be in

store for him. But it was one of the peculiar symptoms of his state, that as he partially recovered his bodily health, the tone of his mind recovered itself also, and his fears for the time were relieved.

There was very little said between him and the doctor that evening. The doctor sat guarding the wine, and thinking when he should have his house to himself again. Sir Louis sat moody, every now and then uttering some impertinence as to the Greshams and the Greshamsbury property, and, at an early hour, allowed Joe to put him to bed.

The horses were ordered on the next day for three, and, at two, Mr. Gagebee came to the house. He had never been there before, nor had he ever met Dr. Thorne except at the squire's dinner. On this occasion he asked only for the baronet.

"Ah! ah! I 'm glad you 're come, Mr. Gagebee; very glad," said Sir Louis, acting the part of the rich, great man with all the power he had. "I want to ask you a few questions so as to make it all clear sailing between us."

"As you have asked to see me, I have come, Sir Louis," said the other, putting on much dignity as he spoke. "But would it not be better that any business there may be should be done among the lawyers?"

"The lawyers are very well, I dare say; but when a man has so large a stake at interest as I have in this Greshamsbury property, why you see, Mr. Gagebee, he feels inclined to look after it himself. Now, do you know, Mr. Gagebee, how much it is that Mr. Gresham owes me?"

Mr. Gagebee, of course, did know very well; but he was not going to discuss the subject with Sir Louis,

if he could help it. "Whatever claim your father's estate may have on that of Mr. Gresham is, as far as I understand, vested in Dr. Thorne's hands as trustee. I am inclined to believe that you have not yourself at present any claim on Greshamsbury. The interest, as it becomes due, is paid to Dr. Thorne; and if I may be allowed to make a suggestion, I would say that it will not be expedient to make any change in that arrangement till the property shall come into your own hands."

"I differ from you entirely, Mr. Gagebee; in toto, as we used to say at Eton. What you mean to say is this;—I can't go to law with Mr. Gresham; I 'm not so sure of that; but, perhaps not. But I can compel Dr. Thorne to look after my interests. I can force him to foreclose. And, to tell you the truth, Gagebee, unless some arrangement is proposed to me which I shall think advantageous, I shall do so at once. There is near a hundred thousand pounds owing to me;—yes, to me. Thorne is only a name in the matter. The money is my money; and, by ——, I mean to look after it."

"Have you any doubt, Sir Louis, as to the money being secure?"

"Yes, I have. It is n't so easy to have a hundred thousand pounds secured. The squire is a poor man, and I don't choose to allow a poor man to owe me such a sum as that. Besides, I mean to invest it in land. I tell you fairly, therefore, I shall foreclose."

Mr. Gagebee, using all the perspicuity which his professional education had left to him, tried to make Sir Louis understand that he had no power to do anything of the kind.

"No power! Mr. Gresham shall see whether I have no power. When a man has a hundred thousand pounds owing to him he ought to have some power; and, as I take it, he has. But we will see. Perhaps you know Finney; do you?" Mr. Gagebee, with a good deal of scorn in his face, said that he had not that pleasure. Mr. Finney was not in his line. "Well, you will know him then, and you 'll find he 's sharp enough; that is, unless I have some offer made to me that I may choose to accept." Mr. Gagebee declared that he was not instructed to make any offer, and so he took his leave.

On that afternoon, Sir Louis went off to Boxall Hill, transferring the miserable task of superintending his self-destruction from the shoulders of the doctor to those of his mother. Of Lady Scatcherd, the baronet took no account in his proposed sojourn in the country, nor did he take much of the doctor in leaving Greshamsbury. He again wrapped himself in his furs, and, with tottering steps, climbed up into the barouche which was to carry him away. "Is my man up behind?" he said to Janet, while the doctor was standing at the little front garden-gate, making his adieux.

"No, sir, he 's not up yet," said Janet, respectfully.

"Then send him out, will you? I can't lose my time waiting here all day."

"I shall come over to Boxall Hill and see you," said the doctor, whose heart softened towards the man, in spite of his brutality, as the hour of his departure came.

"I shall be happy to see you if you like to come, of course;—that is, in the way of visiting, and that sort of thing. As for doctoring, if I want any I shall send

for Fillgrave." Such were his last words as the carriage with a rush, went off from the door.

The doctor, as he re-entered the house, could not help smiling, for he thought of Dr. Fillgrave's last patient at Boxall Hill. "It 's a question to me," said he to himself, "whether Dr. Fillgrave will ever be induced to make another visit to that house, even with the object of rescuing a baronet out of my hands."

"He 's gone; is n't he, uncle?" said Mary, coming out of her room.

"Yes, my dear; he 's gone, poor fellow!"

"He may be a poor fellow, uncle; but he 's a very disagreeable inmate in a house. I have not had any dinner these two days."

"And I have n't had what can be called a cup of tea since he 's been in the house. I 'll make up for that to-night."

CHAPTER XV.

DE COURCY PRECEPTS AND DE COURCY PRACTICE.

THERE is a mode of novel-writing which used to be much in vogue, but which has now gone out of fashion. It is, nevertheless, one which is very expressive when in good hands, and which enables the author to tell his story, or some portion of his story, with more natural truth than any other. I mean that of familiar letters. I trust I shall be excused if I attempt it as regards this one chapter; though, it may be, that I shall break down and fall into commonplace narrative, even before the one chapter be completed. The correspondents are the Lady Amelia De Courcy and Miss Gresham. I, of course, give precedence to the higher rank, but the first epistle originated with the latter-named young lady. Let me hope that they will explain themselves.

"MISS GRESHAM TO LADY AMELIA DE COURCY.

"Greshamsbury House, June, 185—.

"My dearest Amelia,—I wish to consult you on a subject which, as you will perceive, is of a most momentous nature. You know how much reliance I place in your judgment and knowledge of what is proper, and, therefore, I write to you before speaking to any other living person on the subject; not even to

mamma; for, although her judgment is good too, she has so many cares and troubles, that it is natural that it should be a little warped when the interests of her children are concerned. Now that it is all over, I feel that it may possibly have been so in the case of Mr. Moffat.

"You are aware that Mr. Mortimer Gagebee is now staying here, and that he has been here for nearly two months. He is engaged in managing poor papa's affairs, and mamma, who likes him very much, says that he is a most excellent man of business. Of course, you know that he is the junior partner in the very old firm of Gumption, Gagebee, and Gagebee, who, I understand, do not undertake any business at all, except what comes to them from peers, or commoners of the very highest class.

"I soon perceived, dearest Amelia, that Mr. Gagebee paid me more than ordinary attention, and I immediately became very guarded in my manner. I certainly liked Mr. Gagebee from the first. His manners are quite excellent, his conduct to mamma is charming, and, as regards myself, I must say that there has been nothing in his behaviour of which even you could complain. He has never attempted the slightest familiarity, and I will do him the justice to say, that, though he has been very attentive, he has also been very respectful.

"I must confess that, for the last three weeks, I have thought that he meant something. I might, perhaps, have done more to repel him; or I might have consulted you earlier as to the propriety of keeping altogether out of his way. But you know, Amelia, how often these things lead to nothing, and though

I thought all along that Mr. Gagebee was in earnest, I hardly liked to say anything about it even to you till I was quite certain. If you had advised me, you know, to accept his offer, and if, after that, he had never made it, I should have felt so foolish.

"But now he has made it. He came to me yesterday just before dinner, in the little drawing-room, and told me, in the most delicate manner, in words that even you could not but have approved, that his highest ambition was to be thought worthy of my regard, and that he felt for me the warmest love and the most profound admiration, and the deepest respect. You may say, Amelia, that he is only an attorney, and I believe that he is an attorney; but I am sure you would have esteemed him had you heard the very delicate way in which he expressed his sentiments.

"Something had given me a presentiment of what he was going to do when I saw him come into the room, so that I was on my guard. I tried very hard to show no emotion; but I suppose I was a little flurried, as I once detected myself calling him Mr. Mortimer. His name, you know, is Mortimer Gagebee. I ought not to have done so, certainly; but it was not so bad as if I had called him Mortimer without the Mr.? was it? I don't think there could possibly be a prettier Christian name than Mortimer. Well, Amelia, I allowed him to express himself without interruption. He once attempted to take my hand; but even this was done without any assumption of familiarity; and when he saw that I would not permit it, he drew back, and fixed his eyes on the ground as though he were ashamed even of that.

"Of course, I had to give him an answer; and

though I had expected that something of this sort would take place I had not made up my mind on the subject. I would not certainly, under any circumstances, accept him without consulting you. If I really disliked him, of course there would be no doubt; but I can't say, dearest Amelia, that I do absolutely dislike him; and I really think that we should make each other very happy, if the marriage were suitable as regarded both our positions.

"I collected myself as well as I could, and I really do think that you would have said that I did not behave badly, though the position was rather trying. I told him that, of course, I was flattered by his sentiments, though much surprised at hearing them; that since I knew him, I had esteemed and valued him as an acquaintance, but that, looking on him as a man of business, I had never expected anything more. I then endeavoured to explain to him, that I was not perhaps privileged, as some other girls might be, to indulge my own feelings altogether; perhaps that was saying too much, and might make him think that I was in love with him; but from the way I said it, I don't think he would, for I was very much guarded in my manner, and very collected; and then I told him, that in any proposal of marriage that might be made to me, it would be my duty to consult my family as much, if not more than myself.

"He said, of course; and asked whether he might speak to papa. I tried to make him understand, that in talking of my family, I did not exactly mean papa, or even mamma. Of course, I was thinking of what was due to the name of Gresham. I know very well what papa would say. He would give his consent in

half a minute; he is so broken-hearted by these debts. And, to tell you the truth, Amelia, I think mamma would too. He did not seem quite to comprehend what I meant; but he did say that he knew it was a high ambition to marry into the family of the Greshams. I am sure you would confess that he has most proper feelings; and as for expressing them, no man could do it better.

"He owned that it was his ambition to ally himself with a family above his own rank of life, and that he looked to doing so as a means of advancing himself. Now this was at any rate honest. That was one of his motives, he said; though, of course, not his first; and then he declared how truly attached he was to me. In answer to this, I remarked that he had known me only a very short time. This, perhaps, was giving him too much encouragement; but at that moment, I hardly knew what to say, for I did not wish to hurt his feelings. He then spoke of his income. He has fifteen hundred a year from the business, and that will be greatly increased when his father leaves it; and his father is much older than Mr. Gumption, though he is only the second partner. Mortimer Gagebee will be the senior partner himself before very long; and perhaps that does alter his position a little.

"He has a very nice place down somewhere in Surrey. I have heard mamma say it is quite a gentleman's place. It is let now; but he will live there when he is married. And he has property of his own besides which he can settle. So, you see, he is quite as well off as Mr. Oriel; better, indeed; and if a man is in a profession, I believe it is considered that it does not much matter what. Of course, a clergyman can be a

bishop; but then, I think I have heard that one attorney did once become lord-chancellor. I should have my carriage, you know. I remember his saying that, especially, though I cannot recollect how he brought it in.

"I told him, at last, that I was so much taken by surprise that I could not give him an answer then. He was going up to London, he said, on the next day, and might he be permitted to address me on the same subject when he returned? I could not refuse him, you know; and so now I have taken the opportunity of his absence to write to you for your advice. You understand the world so very well, and know so exactly what one ought to do in such a strange position!

"I hope I have made it all intelligible, at least, as to what I have written about. I have said nothing as to my own feelings, because I wish you to think on the matter without consulting them. If it would be derogatory to accept Mr. Gagebee, I certainly would not do so because I happen to like him. If we were to act in that way, what would the world come to, Amelia? Perhaps my ideas may be overstrained; if so, you will tell me.

"When Mr. Oriel proposed for Beatrice nobody seemed to make any objection. It all seemed to go as a matter of course. She says that his family is excellent; but as far as I can learn, his grandfather was a general in India, and came home very rich. Mr. Gagebee's grandfather was a member of the firm, and so, I believe, was his great-grandfather. Don't you think this ought to count for something? Besides, they have no business except with the most aristocratic persons, such as uncle De Courcy, and the Marquis of

Kensington Gore, and that sort. I mention the marquis, because Mr. Mortimer Gagebee is there now. And I know that one of the Gumptions was once in Parliament; and I don't think that any of the Oriels ever were. The name of attorney is certainly very bad, is it not, Amelia? But they certainly do not seem to be all the same, and I do think that this ought to make a difference. To hear Mortimer Gagebee talk of some attorney at Barchester, you would say that there is quite as much difference between them as between a bishop and a curate. And so I think there is.

"I don't wish at all to speak of my own feelings; but if he were not an attorney, he is, I think, the sort of man that I should like. He is very nice in every way, and if you were not told, I don't think you 'd know he was an attorney. But, dear Amelia, I will be guided by you altogether. He is certainly much nicer than Mr. Moffat, and has a great deal more to say for himself. Of course, Mr. Moffat having been in Parliament, and having been taken up by uncle De Courcy, was in a different sphere; but I really felt almost relieved when he behaved in that way. With Mortimer Gagebee, I think it would be different.

"I shall wait so impatiently for your answer, so do pray write at once. I hear some people say that these sort of things are not so much thought of now as they were once, and that all manner of marriages are considered to be comme il faut. I do not want, you know, to make myself foolish by being too particular. Perhaps all these changes are bad, and I rather think they are; but if the world changes, one must change too. One can't go against the world.

"So do write and tell me what you think. Do not

suppose that I dislike the man, for I really cannot say that I do. But I would not for anything make an alliance for which any one bearing the name of De Courcy would have to blush.

"Always, dearest Amelia,

"Your most affectionate Cousin,

"AUGUSTA GRESHAM.

"P.S.—I fear Frank is going to be very foolish with Mary Thorne. You know it is absolutely important that Frank should marry money.

"It strikes me as quite possible that Mortimer Gagebee may be in Parliament some of these days. He is just the man for it."

Poor Augusta prayed very hard for her husband; but she prayed to a bosom that on this subject was as hard as a flint and she prayed in vain. Augusta Gresham was twenty-two; Lady Amelia De Courcy was thirty-four; was it likely that Lady Amelia would permit Augusta to marry, the issue having thus been left in her hands? Why should Augusta derogate from her position by marrying beneath herself, seeing that Lady Amelia had spent so many more years in the world without having found it necessary to do so? Augusta's letter was written on two sheets of note-paper, crossed all over; and Lady Amelia's answer was almost equally formidable.

"LADY AMELIA DE COURCY TO MISS AUGUSTA GRESHAM.

"Courcy Castle, June, 185—.

"My dear Augusta,—I received your letter yesterday morning, but I have put off answering it till this evening, as I have wished to give it very mature con-

sideration. The question is one which concerns, not only your character, but happiness for life, and nothing less than very mature consideration would justify me in giving a decided opinion on the subject.

"In the first place, I may tell you, that I have not a word to say against Mr. Mortimer Gagebee." When Augusta had read as far as this, her heart sank within her; the rest was all leather and prunella; she saw at once that the fiat had gone against her, and that her wish to become Mrs. Mortimer Gagebee was not to be indulged. "I have known him for a long time, and I believe him to be a very respectable person, and I have no doubt a good man of business. The firm of Messrs. Gumption and Gagebee stands probably quite among the first attorneys in London, and I know that papa has a very high opinion of them.

"All these would be excellent arguments to use in favour of Mr. Gagebee as a suitor, had his proposals been made to any one in his own rank of life. But you, in considering the matter, should, I think, look on it in a very different light. The very fact that you pronounce him to be so much superior to other attorneys, shows in how very low esteem you hold the profession in general. It shows also, dear Augusta, how well aware you are that they are a class of people among whom you should not seek a partner for life.

"My opinion is, that you should make Mr. Gagebee understand,—very courteously, of course,—that you cannot accept his hand. You observe that he himself confesses, that in marrying you he would seek a wife in a rank above his own. Is it not, therefore, clear, that in marrying him, you would descend to a rank below your own?

"I shall be very sorry if this grieves you; but still it will be better that you should bear the grief of overcoming a temporary fancy, than take a step which may so probably make you unhappy;—and which some of your friends would certainly regard as disgraceful.

"It is not permitted to us, my dear Augusta, to think of ourselves in such matters. As you truly say, if we were to act in that way, what would the world come to! It has been God's pleasure that we should be born with high blood in our veins. This is a great boon which we both value, but the boon has its responsibilities as well as its privileges. It is established by law that the royal family shall not intermarry with subjects. In our case there is no law, but the necessity is not the less felt. We should not intermarry with those who are probably of a lower rank. Mr. Mortimer Gagebee, is, after all, only an attorney; and, although you speak of his great-grandfather, he is a man of no blood whatsoever. You must acknowledge that such an admixture should be looked on by a De Courcy, or even by a Gresham, as a pollution." Here Augusta got very red, and she felt almost inclined to be angry with her cousin. "Beatrice's marriage with Mr. Oriel is different;—though, remember, I am by no means defending that; it may be good or bad, and I have had no opportunity of inquiring respecting Mr. Oriel's family. Beatrice, moreover, has never appeared to me to feel what was due to herself in such matters. But, as I said, her marriage with Mr. Oriel is very different. Clergymen,—particularly the rectors and vicars of country parishes,—do become privileged above other professional men. I could explain why, but it would be too long in a letter.

"Your feelings on the subject altogether do you great credit. I have no doubt that Mr. Gresham, if asked, would accede to the match; but that is just the reason why he should not be asked. It would not be right that I should say anything against your father to you; but it is impossible for any of us not to see that all through life he has thrown away every advantage, and sacrificed his family. Why is he now in debt, as you say? Why is he not holding the family seat in Parliament? Even though you are his daughter, you cannot but feel that you would not do right to consult him on such a subject.

"As to my dear aunt, I feel sure, that, were she in good health, and left to exercise her own judgment, she would not wish to see you married to the agent for the family estate. For, dear Augusta, that is the real truth. Mr. Gagebee often comes here in the way of business; and though papa always receives him as a gentleman,—that is, he dines at table and all that,—he is not on the same footing in the house as the ordinary guests and friends of the family. How would you like to be received at Courcy Castle in the same way?

"You will say, perhaps, that you would still be papa's niece. So you would. But you know how strict in such matters papa is, and you must remember, that the wife always follows the rank of the husband. Papa is accustomed to the strict etiquette of a court, and I am sure that no consideration would induce him to receive the estate-agent in the light of a nephew. Indeed, were you to marry Mr. Gagebee, the house to which he belongs would, I imagine, have to give up the management of this property.

"Even were Mr. Gagebee in Parliament,—and I do

not see how it is probable that he should get there,—it would not make any difference. You must remember, dearest, that I never was an advocate for the Moffat match. I acquiesced in it, because mamma did so. If I could have had my own way, I would adhere to all our old prescriptive principles. Neither money nor position can atone to me for low birth. But the world, alas! is retrograding; and, according to the new-fangled doctrines of the day, a lady of blood is not disgraced by allying herself to a man of wealth, and what may be called quasi-aristocratic position. I wish it were otherwise; but so it is. And, therefore, the match with Mr. Moffat was not disgraceful, though it could not be regarded as altogether satisfactory.

"But with Mr. Gagebee the matter would be altogether different. He is a man earning his bread; honestly, I dare say, but in a humble position. You say he is very respectable. I do not doubt it; and so is Mr. Scraggs, the butcher in Courcy. You see, Augusta, to what such arguments reduce you.

"I dare say he may be nicer than Mr. Moffat, in one way. That is, he may have more small-talk at his command, and be more clever in all those little pursuits and amusements which are valued by ordinary young ladies. But my opinion is, that neither I nor you would be justified in sacrificing ourselves for such amusements. We have high duties before us. It may be that the performance of those duties will prohibit us from taking a part in the ordinary arena of the feminine world. It is natural that girls should wish to marry; and, therefore, those who are weak, take the first that come. Those who have more judgment, make some sort of selection. But the strongest-minded

are, perhaps, those who are able to forego themselves and their own fancies, and to refrain from any alliance that does not tend to the maintenance of high principles. Of course, I speak of those who have blood in their veins. You and I need not dilate as to the conduct of others.

"I hope what I have said will convince you. Indeed, I know that it only requires that you and I should have a little cousinly talk on this matter to be quite in accord. You must now remain at Greshamsbury till Mr. Gagebee shall return. Immediately that he does so, seek an interview with him; do not wait till he asks for it; then tell him, that when he addressed you, the matter had taken you so much by surprise, that you were not at the moment able to answer him with that decision that the subject demanded. Tell him, that you are flattered,—in saying this, however, you must keep a collected countenance, and be very cold in your manner;—but that family reasons would forbid you to avail yourself of his offer, even did no other cause prevent it.

"And then, dear Augusta, come to us here. I know you will be a little downhearted after going through this struggle; but I will endeavour to inspirit you. When we are both together, you will feel more sensibly the value of that high position which you will preserve by rejecting Mr. Gagebee, and will regret less acutely whatever you may lose.

"Your very affectionate Cousin,

"Amelia de Courcy.

"P.S.—I am greatly grieved about Frank; but I have long feared that he would do some very silly

thing. I have heard lately that Miss Mary Thorne is not even the legitimate niece of your Dr. Thorne, but is the daughter of some poor creature who was seduced by the doctor, in Barchester. I do not know how true this may be, but I think your brother should be put on his guard. It might do good."

Poor Augusta! She was in truth to be pitied, for her efforts were made with the intention of doing right according to her lights. For Mr. Moffat she had never cared a straw; and when, therefore, she lost the piece of gilding for which she had been instructed by her mother to sell herself, it was impossible to pity her. But Mr. Gagebee she would have loved with that sort of love which it was in her power to bestow. With him she would have been happy, respectable, and contented.

She had written her letter with great care. When the offer was made to her, she could not bring herself to throw Lady Amelia to the winds and marry the man, as it were, out of her own head. Lady Amelia had been the tyrant of her life, and so she strove hard to obtain her tyrant's permission. She used all her little cunning in showing that, after all, Mr. Gagebee was not so very plebeian. All her little cunning was utterly worthless. Lady Amelia's mind was too strong to be caught with such chaff. Augusta could not serve God and Mammon. She must either be true to the god of her cousin's idolatry, and remain single, or serve the Mammon of her own inclinations, and marry Mr. Gagebee.

When refolding her cousin's letter, after the first perusal, she did for a moment think of rebellion.

Could she not be happy at the nice place in Surrey, having, as she would have, a carriage, even though all the De Courcys should drop her? It had been put to her that she would not like to be received at Courcy Castle with the scant civility which would be considered due to a Mrs. Mortimer Gagebee; but what if she could put up without being received at Courcy Castle at all? Such ideas did float through her mind, dimly.

But her courage failed her. It is so hard to throw off a tyrant;—so much easier to yield, when we have been in the habit of yielding. This third letter, therefore, was written; and it is the end of the correspondence.

"MISS AUGUSTA GRESHAM TO LADY AMELIA DE COURCY.

"Greshamsbury House, July, 185—.

"My dearest Amelia,—I did not answer your letter before, because I thought it better to delay doing so till Mr. Gagebee had been here. He came the day before yesterday, and yesterday I did, as nearly as possible, what you advised. Perhaps, on the whole, it will be better. As you say, rank has its responsibilities as well as its privileges.

"I don't quite understand what you mean about clergymen, but we can talk that over when we meet. Indeed, it seems to me that if one is to be particular about family,—and I am sure I think we ought,—one ought to be so without exception. If Mr. Oriel be a parvenu, Beatrice's children won't be well born merely because their father was a clergyman, even though he is a rector. Since my former letter, I have heard that

Mr. Gagebee's great-great-great-grandfather established the firm; and there are many people who were nobodies then who are thought to have good blood in their veins now.

"But I do not say this because I differ from you. I agree with you so fully, that I at once made up my mind to reject the man; and, consequently, I have done so.

"When I told him I could not accept him from family considerations, he asked me whether I had spoken to papa. I told him, no; and that it would be no good, as I had made up my own mind. I don't think he quite understood me; but it did not perhaps much matter. You told me to be very cold, and I think that perhaps he thought me less gracious than before. Indeed, I fear that when he first spoke, I may seem to have given him too much encouragement. However, it is all over now; quite over!" (As Augusta wrote this, she barely managed to save the paper beneath her hand from being moistened with the tear which escaped from her eye.)

"I do not mind confessing now," she continued, "at any rate to you, that I did like Mr. Gagebee a little. I think his temper and disposition would have suited me. But I am quite satisfied that I have done right. He tried very hard to make me change my mind. That is, he said a great many things as to whether I would not put off my decision. But I was quite firm. I must say that he behaved very well, and that I really do think he liked me honestly and truly; but, of course, I could not sacrifice family considerations on that account.

"Yes; rank has its responsibilities as well as its

privileges. I will remember that. It is necessary to do so, as otherwise one would be without consolation for what one has to suffer. For I find that one has to suffer, Amelia. I know papa would have advised me to marry this man; and so, I dare say, mamma would, and Frank, and Beatrice, if they knew that I liked him. It would not be so bad if we all thought alike about it; but it is hard to have the responsibilities all on one's own shoulder; is it not?

"But I will go over to you, and you will comfort me. I always feel stronger on this subject at Courcy than at Greshamsbury. We will have a long talk about it, and then I shall be happy again. I purpose going on next Friday, if that will suit you and dear aunt. I have told mamma that you all wanted me, and she made no objection. Do write at once, dearest Amelia, for to hear from you now will be my only comfort.

"Yours, ever most affectionately and obliged,

"AUGUSTA GRESHAM.

"P.S.—I told mamma what you said about Mary Thorne, and she said, 'Yes; I suppose all the world knows it now; and if all the world did know it, it would make no difference to Frank.' She seemed very angry; so you see it was true."

Though by so doing, we shall somewhat anticipate the end of our story, it may be desirable that the full tale of Mr. Gagebee's loves should be told here. When Mary is breaking her heart on her deathbed in the last chapter, or otherwise accomplishing her destiny, we shall hardly find a fit opportunity of saying much about Mr. Gagebee and his aristocratic bride.

For he did succeed at last in obtaining a bride in whose veins ran the noble ichor of De Courcy blood, in spite of the high doctrine preached so eloquently by the Lady Amelia. As Augusta had truly said, he had failed to understand her. He was led to think, by her manner of receiving his first proposal,—and justly so, enough,—that she liked him, and would accept him; and he was, therefore, rather perplexed by his second interview. He tried again and again, and begged permission to mention the matter to Mr. Gresham; but Augusta was very firm, and he at last retired in disgust. Augusta went to Courcy Castle, and received from her cousin that consolation and re-strengthening which she so much required.

Four years afterwards,—long after the fate of Mary Thorne had fallen, like a thunderbolt, on the inhabitants of Greshamsbury; when Beatrice was preparing for her second baby, and each of the twins had her accepted lover, Mr. Mortimer Gagebee went down to Courcy Castle; of course, on matters of business. No doubt he dined at the table, and all that. We have the word of Lady Amelia, that the earl, with his usual good-nature, allowed him such privileges. Let us hope that he never encroached on them.

But on this occasion, Mr. Gagebee stayed a long time at the castle, and singular rumours as to the cause of his prolonged visit became current in the little town. No female scion of the present family of Courcy had, as yet, found a mate. We may imagine that eagles find it difficult to pair when they become scarce in their localities; and we all know how hard it has sometimes been to get comme il faut husbands when there has been any number of Protestant princesses on hand.

Some such difficulty had, doubtless, brought it about that the countess was still surrounded by her full bevy of maidens. Rank has its responsibilities as well as its privileges, and these young ladies' responsibilities seem to have consisted in rejecting any suitor who may have hitherto kneeled to them. But now it was told through Courcy that one suitor had kneeled, and not in vain. From Courcy the rumour flew to Barchester, and thence came down to Greshamsbury, startling the inhabitants, and making one poor heart to throb with a violence that would have been piteous had it been known. The suitor, so named, was Mr. Mortimer Gagebee.

Yes; Mr. Mortimer Gagebee had now awarded to him many other privileges than those of dining at the table,—and all that. He rode with the young ladies in the park, and they all talked to him very familiarly before company; all except the Lady Amelia. The countess even called him Mortimer, and treated him quite as one of the family.

At last came a letter from the countess to her dear sister Arabella. It should be given at length but that I fear to introduce another epistle. It is such an easy mode of writing, and facility is always dangerous. In this letter it was announced with much preliminary ambiguity, that Mortimer Gagebee,—who had been found to be a treasure in every way; quite a paragon of men,—was about to be taken into the De Courcy bosom as a child of that house. On that day fortnight, he was destined to lead to the altar,—the Lady Amelia.

The countess then went on to say that dear Amelia did not write herself, being so much engaged by her

coming duties,—the responsibilities of which she doubtless fully realised, as well as the privileges; but she had begged her mother to request that the twins should come and act as bridesmaids on the occasion. Dear Augusta, she knew, was too much occupied in the coming event in Mr. Oriel's family to be able to attend.

Mr. Mortimer Gagebee was taken into the De Courcy family, and did lead the Lady Amelia to the altar; and the Gresham twins did go there and act as bridesmaids. And, which is much more to say for human nature, Augusta did forgive her cousin, and, after a certain interval, went on a visit to that nice place in Surrey which she had once hoped would be her own home. It would have been a very nice place, Augusta thought, had not Lady Amelia Gagebee been so very economical.

We must presume that there was some explanation between them. If so, Augusta yielded to it, and confessed it to be satisfactory. She had always yielded to her cousin, and loved her with that sort of love which is begotten between fear and respect. Anything was better than quarrelling with her cousin Amelia.

And Mr. Mortimer Gagebee did not altogether make a bad bargain. He never received a shilling of dowry, but that he had not expected. Nor did he want it. His troubles arose from the overstrained economy of his noble wife. She would have it, that as she had married a poor man,—Mr. Gagebee, however, was not a poor man,—it behoved her to manage her house with great care. Such a match as that she had made,—this she told in confidence to Augusta,—had its responsibilities as well as its privileges.

But, on the whole, Mr. Gagebee did not repent his bargain. When he asked his friends to dine, he could tell them that Lady Amelia would be very glad to see them; his marriage gave him some éclat at his club, and some additional weight in the firm to which he belonged; he gets his share of the Courcy shooting, and is asked about to Greshamsbury and other Barsetshire houses, not only "to dine at table and all that," but to take his part in whatever delights country society there has to offer. He lives, too, with the great hope that his noble father-in-law may some day be able to bring him into Parliament.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT THE WORLD SAYS ABOUT BLOOD.

"BEATRICE," said Frank, rushing suddenly into his sister's room, "I want you to do me one especial favour." This was three or four days after Frank had seen Mary Thorne. Since that time he had spoken to none of his family on the subject; but he was only postponing from day to day the task of telling his father. He had now completed his round of visits to the kennel, master huntsman, and stables of the county hunt, and was at liberty to attend to his own affairs. So he had decided on speaking to the squire that very day; but he first made his request to his sister.

"I want you to do me one especial favour." The day for Beatrice's marriage had now been fixed, and it was not to be very distant. Mr. Oriel had urged that their honeymoon trip would lose half its delights if they did not take advantage of the fine weather; and Beatrice had nothing to allege in answer. The day had just been fixed, and when Frank ran into her room with his special request, she was not in a humour to refuse him anything.

"If you wish me to be at your wedding, you must do it," said he.

"Wish you to be there! You must be there, of course. Oh, Frank! what do you mean? I 'll do

anything you ask; if it is not to go to the moon, or anything of that sort."

Frank was too much in earnest to joke. "You must have Mary for one of your bridesmaids," he said. "Now, mind; there may be some difficulty, but you must insist on it. I know what has been going on; but it is not to be borne that she should be excluded on such a day as that. You that have been like sisters all your lives till a year ago?"

"But, Frank!"

"Now, Beatrice, don't have any buts; say that you will do it, and it will be done. I am sure Oriel will approve, and so will my father."

"But, Frank, you won't hear me."

"Not if you make objections. I have set my heart on your doing it."

"But I had set my heart on the same thing."

"Well?"

"And I went to Mary on purpose; and told her just as you tell me now, that she must come. I meant to make mamma understand that I could not be happy unless it were so. But Mary positively refused."

"Refused! What did she say?"

"I could not tell you what she said; indeed, it would not be right if I could; but she positively declined. She seemed to feel, that after all that had happened, she never could come to Greshamsbury again."

"Fiddlesticks!"

"But, Frank, those are her feelings; and, to tell the truth, I could not combat them. I know she is not happy; but time will cure that. And, to tell you the truth, Frank——"

"It was before I came back that you asked her, was it not?"

"Yes; just the day before you came."

"Well, it 's all altered now. I have seen her since that."

"Have you, Frank?"

"What do you take me for? Of course I have. The very first day I went to her. And now, Beatrice, you may believe me or not, as you like; but if ever I marry I shall marry Mary Thorne. And if ever she marries, I think I may say, she will marry me. At any rate, I have her promise. And now, you cannot be surprised that I should wish her to be at your wedding;—or that I should declare, that if she is absent, I will be absent. I don't want any secrets, and you may tell my mother if you like it;—and all the De Courcys too, for anything I care."

Frank had ever been used to command his sisters; and they, especially Beatrice, had ever been used to obey. On this occasion, she was well inclined to do so, if she only knew how. She again remembered how Mary had once sworn to be at her wedding, to be near her, and to touch her,—even though all the blood of the De Courcys should be crowded before the altar railings.

"I should be so happy that she should be there; but what am I to do, Frank, if she refuses? I have asked her, and she has refused."

"Go to her again. You need not have any scruples with her. Do not I tell you she will be your sister? Not come again to Greshamsbury! Why, I tell you that she will be living here while you are living there at the parsonage, for years and years to come."

Beatrice promised that she would go to Mary again, and that she would endeavour to talk her mother over if Mary would consent to come. But she could not yet make herself believe that Mary Thorne would ever be mistress of Greshamsbury. It was so indispensably necessary that Frank should marry money! Besides, what were those horrid rumours which were now becoming rife as to Mary's birth;—rumours more horrid than any which had been yet heard?

Augusta had said hardly more than the truth when she spoke of her father being broken-hearted by his debts. His troubles were becoming almost too many for him; and Mr. Gagebee, though no doubt he was an excellent man of business, did not seem to lessen them. Mr. Gagebee, indeed, was continually pointing out how much he owed, and in what a quagmire of difficulties he had entangled himself. Now, to do Mr. Yates Umbleby justice, he had never made himself disagreeable in this manner.

Mr. Gagebee had been doubtless right, when he declared that Sir Louis Scatcherd had not himself the power to take any steps hostile to the squire; but Sir Louis had also been right, when he boasted that, in spite of his father's will, he could cause others to move in the matter. Others did move, and were moving, and it began to be understood that a moiety, at least, of the remaining Greshamsbury property must be sold. Even this, however, would by no means leave the squire in undisturbed possession of the other moiety. And thus Mr. Gresham was nearly broken-hearted.

Frank had now been at home a week, and his father had not as yet spoken to him about the family troubles; nor had a word as yet been said between them as to

Mary Thorne. It had been agreed that Frank should go away for twelve months, in order that he might forget her. He had been away the twelvemonth, and had now returned, not having forgotten her.

It generally happens, that in every household, one subject of importance occupies it at a time. The subject of importance now mostly thought of in the Greshamsbury household was the marriage of Beatrice. Lady Arabella had to supply the trousseau for her daughter; the squire had to supply the money for the trousseau; Mr. Gagebee had the task of obtaining the money for the squire. While this was going on, Mr. Gresham was not anxious to talk to his son, either about his own debts or his son's love. There would be a time for these things when the marriage-feast should be over.

So thought the father, but the matter was precipitated by Frank. He also had put off the declaration which he had to make, partly from a wish to spare the squire, but partly also with a view to spare himself. We have all some of that cowardice which induces us to postpone an inevitably evil day. At this time the discussions as to Beatrice's wedding were frequent in the house, and at one of them Frank had heard his mother repeat the names of the proposed bridesmaids. Mary's name was not among them, and hence had arisen his attack on his sister.

Lady Arabella had had her reason for naming the list before her son; but she overshot her mark. She wished to show to him how totally Mary was forgotten at Greshamsbury; but she only inspired him with a resolve that she should not be forgotten. He accordingly went to his sister; and then, the subject being full on

his mind, he resolved at once to discuss it with his father.

"Sir, are you at leisure for five minutes?" he said, entering the room in which the squire was accustomed to sit majestically, to receive his tenants, scold his dependents, and in which, in former happy days, he had always arranged the meets of the Barsetshire hunt.

Mr. Gresham was quite at leisure. When was he not so? But had he been immersed in the deepest business of which he was capable, he would gladly have put it aside at his son's instance.

"I don't like to have any secret from you, sir," said Frank; "nor, for the matter of that, from anybody else,"—the anybody else was intended to have reference to his mother,—"and, therefore, I would rather tell you at once what I have made up my mind to do."

Frank's address was very abrupt, and he felt it was so. He was rather red in the face, and his manner was fluttered. He had quite made up his mind to break the whole affair to his father; but he had not quite made up his mind as to the best mode of doing so.

"Good heavens, Frank! what do you mean? you are not going to do anything rash? What is it you mean, Frank?"

"I don't think it is rash," said Frank.

"Sit down, my boy; sit down. What is it that you say you are going to do?"

"Nothing immediately, sir," said he, rather abashed; "but as I have made up my mind about Mary Thorne, —quite made up my mind, I think it right to tell you."

"Oh, about Mary," said the squire, almost relieved.

And then Frank, in voluble language, which he hardly, however, had quite under his command, told

his father all that had passed between him and Mary. "You see, sir," said he, "that it is fixed now, and cannot be altered. Nor must it be altered. You asked me to go away for twelve months, and I have done so. It has made no difference, you see. As to our means of living, I am quite willing to do anything that may be best and most prudent. I was thinking, sir, of taking a farm somewhere near here, and living on that."

The squire sat quite silent for some moments after this communication had been made to him. Frank's conduct, as a son, had been such that he could not find fault with it; and, in this special matter of his love, how was it possible for him to find fault? He himself was almost as fond of Mary as of a daughter; and, though he too would have been desirous that his son should relieve the estate from its embarrassments by a rich marriage, he did not at all share Lady Arabella's feelings on the subject. No Countess De Courcy had ever engraved it on the tablets of his mind that the world would come to ruin if Frank did not marry money. Ruin there was, and would be, but it had been brought about by no sin of Frank's.

"Do you remember about her birth, Frank?" he said, at last.

"Yes, sir; everything. She told me all she knew; and Dr. Thorne finished the story."

"And what do you think of it?"

"It is a pity, and a misfortune. It might, perhaps, have been a reason why you or my mother should not have had Mary in the house many years ago; but it cannot make any difference now."

Frank had not meant to lean heavily on his father; but he did do so. The story had never been told to

Lady Arabella; was not even known to her now, positively, and on good authority. But Mr. Gresham had always known it. If Mary's birth was so great a stain upon her, why had he brought her into his house among his children?

"It is a misfortune, Frank; a very great misfortune. It will not do for you and me to ignore birth. Too much of the value of one's position depends upon it."

"But what was Mr. Moffat's birth?" said Frank, almost with scorn; "or what Miss Dunstable's?" he would have added, had it not been that his father had not been concerned in that sin of wedding him to the Oil of Lebanon.

"True, Frank. But yet, what you would mean me to say is not true. We must take the world as we find it. Were you to marry a rich heiress, were her birth even as low as that of poor Mary——"

"Don't call her poor Mary, father. She is not poor. My wife will have a right to take rank in the world, however she was born."

"Well,—poor in that way. But were she an heiress, the world would forgive her birth on account of her wealth."

"The world is very complaisant, sir."

"You must take it as you find it, Frank. I only say that such is the fact. If Porlock were to marry the daughter of a shoe-black, without a farthing, he would make a mésalliance; but if the daughter of the shoe-black had half a million of money, nobody would dream of saying so. I am stating no opinion of my own. I am only giving you the world's opinion."

"I don't care a straw for the world."

"That is a mistake, my boy; you do care for it, and

would be very foolish if you did not. What you mean is, that, on this particular point, you value your love more than the world's opinion."

"Well, yes; that is what I mean."

But the squire, though he had been very lucid in his definition, had got no nearer to his object; had not even yet ascertained what his own object was. This marriage would be ruinous to Greshamsbury; and yet, what was he to say against it, seeing that the ruin had been his fault, and not his son's?

"You could let me have a farm; could you not, sir? I was thinking of about six or seven hundred acres. I suppose it could be managed somehow?"

"A farm?" said the father, abstractedly.

"Yes, sir. I must do something for my living. I should make less of a mess of that than of anything else. Besides, it would take such a time to be an attorney, or a doctor, or anything of that sort."

Do something for his living! And was the heir of Greshamsbury come to this,—the heir and only son? Whereas, he, the squire, had succeeded at an earlier age than Frank's to an unembarrassed income of fourteen thousand pounds a year? The reflection was very hard to bear.

"Yes; I dare say you could have a farm:" and then he threw himself back in his chair, closing his eyes. Then, after a while, he rose again, and walked hurriedly about the room. "Frank," he said, at last, standing opposite to his son, "I wonder what you think of me?"

"Think of you, sir!" ejaculated Frank.

"Yes; what you think of me, for having thus ruined you. I wonder whether you hate me?"

Frank, jumping up from his chair, threw his arms

round his father's neck. "Hate you, sir! How can you speak so cruelly? You know well that I love you. And, father, do not trouble yourself about the estate for my sake. I do not care for it. I can be just as happy without it. Let the girls have what is left, and I will make my own way in the world, somehow. I will go to Australia. Yes, sir, that will be best. I and Mary will both go. Nobody will care about her birth there. But, father, never say, never think, that I do not love you!"

The squire was too much moved to speak at once, so he sat down again, and covered his face with his hands. Frank went on pacing the room, till, gradually, his first idea recovered possession of his mind, and the remembrance of his father's grief faded away. "May I tell Mary," he said, at last, "that you consent to our marriage? It will make her so happy."

But the squire was not prepared to say this. He was pledged to his wife to do all that he could to oppose it; and he himself thought, that if anything could consummate the family ruin, it would be this marriage. "I cannot say that, Frank. I cannot say that. What would you both live on? It would be madness."

"We would go to Australia," answered he, bitterly. "I have just said so."

"Oh, no, my boy; you cannot do that! You must not throw the old place up altogether. There is no other one but you, Frank; and we have lived here now for so many, many years."

"But if we cannot live here any longer, father?"

"But for this scheme of yours, we might do so. I will give up everything to you, the management of the estate, the park, all the land we have in hand, if you

will give up this fatal scheme. For, Frank, it is fatal. You are only twenty-three. Why should you be in such a hurry?"

"You married at twenty-one, sir."

Frank was again severe on his father, but unwittingly. "Yes, I did," said Mr. Gresham; "and see what has come of it! Had I waited ten years longer, how different would everything have been! No, Frank, I cannot consent to such a marriage; nor will your mother."

"It is your consent I ask, sir; and I am asking for nothing but your consent."

"It would be sheer madness; madness for you both. My own Frank, my dear, dear boy, do not drive me to distraction! Give it up for four years?"

"Four years!"

"Yes; for four years. I ask it as a personal favour; as an obligation to myself, in order that we may be saved from ruin; you, your mother, and sisters, your family name, and the old house. I do not talk about myself; but were such a marriage to take place, I should be driven to despair." Frank found it very hard to resist his father, who now had hold of his hand and arm, and was thus half retaining him, and half embracing him. "Frank, say that you will forget this for four years;—say for three years."

But Frank would not say so. To postpone his marriage for four years, or for three, seemed to him to be tantamount to giving up Mary altogether; and he would not acknowledge that any one had a right to demand of him to do that.

"My word is pledged, sir," said he.

"Pledged! Pledged to whom?"

"To Miss Thorne."

"But I will see her, Frank;—and her uncle. She was always reasonable. I am sure she will not wish to bring ruin on her old friends at Greshamsbury."

"Her old friends at Greshamsbury have done but little lately to deserve her consideration. She has been treated shamefully. I know it has not been by you, sir; but I must say so. She has already been treated shamefully; but I will not treat her falsely."

"Well, Frank, I can say no more to you. I have destroyed the estate which should have been yours, and I have no right to expect you should regard what I say."

Frank was greatly distressed. He had not any feeling of animosity against his father with reference to the property, and would have done anything to make the squire understand this, short of giving up his engagement to Mary. His feeling rather was, that, as each had a case against the other, they should cry quits;—that he should forgive his father for his bad management, on condition that he himself was to be forgiven with regard to his determined marriage. Not that he put it exactly in that shape, even to himself; but could he have unravelled his own thoughts, he would have found that such was the web on which they were based.

"Father, I do regard what you say; but you would not have me be false? Had you doubled the property instead of lessening it, I could not regard what you say any more."

"I should be able to speak in a very different tone; I feel that, Frank."

"Do not feel it any more, sir. Say what you wish,

as you would have said it under other circumstances; and pray believe this, the idea never occurs to me, that I have ground of complaint as regards the property; never. Whatever troubles we may have, do not let that trouble you."

Soon after this Frank left him. What more was there that could be said between them? They could not be of one accord; but even yet it might not be necessary that they should quarrel. He went out, and roamed by himself through the grounds, rather more in meditation than was his wont. If he did marry, how was he to live? He talked of a profession; but had he meant to do as others do, who make their way in professions, he should have thought of that a year or two ago!—or, rather, have done more than think of it. He spoke also of a farm, but even that could not be had in a moment; nor, if it could, would it produce a living. Where was his capital? Where his skill? And he might have asked also, where the industry so necessary for such a trade? He might set his father at defiance, and if Mary were equally headstrong with himself, he might marry her. But what then?

As he walked slowly about, cutting off the daisies with his stick, he met Mr. Oriel, going up to the house, as was now his custom, to dine there and spend the evening, close to Beatrice. "How I envy you, Oriel!" he said. "What would I not give to have such a position in the world as yours!"

"Thou shalt not covet a man's house, nor his wife," said Mr. Oriel;—"perhaps it ought to have been added, nor his position."

"It would n't have made much difference. When

a man is tempted, the Commandments, I believe, do not go for much."

"Do they not, Frank? That 's dangerous doctrine; and one which, if you had my position, you would hardly admit. But what makes you so much out of sorts? Your own position is generally considered about the best which the world has to give."

"Is it? Then let me tell you that the world has very little to give. What can I do? Where can I turn? If there be an empty, lying humbug in the world, it is the theory of high birth and pure blood which some of us endeavour to maintain. Blood, indeed! If my father had been a baker, I should know by this time where to look for my livelihood. As it is, I am told of nothing but my blood. Will my blood ever get me half-a-crown?"

And then the young democrat walked on again in solitude, leaving Mr. Oriel in doubt as to the exact line of argument which he had meant to inculcate.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TWO DOCTORS CHANGE PATIENTS.

Dr. Fillgrave still continued his visits to Greshamsbury, for Lady Arabella had not yet mustered the courage necessary for swallowing her pride and sending once more for Dr. Thorne. Nothing pleased Dr. Fillgrave more than those visits.

He habitually attended grander families, and richer people; but then, he had attended them habitually. Greshamsbury was a prize taken from the enemy; it was his rock of Gibraltar, of which he thought much more than of any ordinary Hampshire or Wiltshire which had always been within his own kingdom.

He was just starting one morning with his post-horses for Greshamsbury, when an impudent-looking groom, with a crooked nose, trotted up to his door. For Joe still had a crooked nose, all the doctor's care having been inefficacious to remedy the evil effects of Bridget's little tap with the rolling-pin. Joe had no written credentials, for his master was hardly equal to writing, and Lady Scatcherd had declined to put herself into further personal communication with Dr. Fillgrave; but he had effrontery enough to deliver any message.

"Be you Dr. Fillgrave?" said Joe, with one finger just raised to his cockaded hat.

"Yes," said Dr. Fillgrave, with one foot on the step

of the carriage, but pausing at the sight of so well-turned-out a servant. "Yes; I am Dr. Fillgrave."

"Then you be to go to Boxall Hill immediately; before anywhere else."

"Boxall Hill!" said the doctor, with a very angry frown.

"Yes, Boxall Hill! my master's place. My master is Sir Louis Scatcherd, baronet. You 've heard of him, I suppose?"

Dr. Fillgrave had not his mind quite ready for such an occasion. So he withdrew his foot from the carriage-step, and rubbing his hands one over another, looked at his own hall-door for inspiration. A single glance at his face was sufficient to show that no ordinary thoughts were being turned over within his breast.

"Well!" said Joe, thinking that his master's name had not altogether produced the magic effect which he had expected; remembering, also, how submissive Greyson had always been, who, being a London doctor, must be supposed to be a bigger man than this provincial fellow. "Do you know as how my master is dying, very like, while you stand there?"

"What is your master's disease?" said the doctor, facing Joe, slowly, and still rubbing his hands. "What ails him? What is the matter with him?"

"Oh; the matter with him? Well, to say it out at once then, he do take a drop too much at times, and then he has the horrors;—what is it they call it? delicious beam-ends, or something of that sort."

"Oh, ah, yes; I know; and tell me, my man, who is attending him?"

"Attending him? Why, I do, and his mother, that is, her ladyship."

"Yes; but what medical attendant; what doctor?"

"Why, there was Greyson, in London, and——"

"Greyson!" and the doctor looked as though a name so medicinally humble had never before struck the tympanum of his ear.

"Yes; Greyson. And then, down at what 's the name of the place, there was Thorne."

"Greshamsbury?"

"Yes; Greshamsbury. But he and Thorne did n't hit it off; and so since that he has had no one but myself."

"I will be at Boxall Hill in the course of the morning," said Dr. Fillgrave; "or, rather, you may say, that I will be there at once. I will take it in my way." And having thus resolved, he gave his orders that the post-horses should make such a detour as would enable him to visit Boxall Hill on his road. "It is impossible," said he to himself, "that I should be twice treated in such a manner in the same house."

He was not, however, altogether in a comfortable frame of mind as he was driven up to the hall-door. He could not but remember the smile of triumph with which his enemy had regarded him in that hall; he could not but think how he had returned fee-less to Barchester, and how little he had gained in the medical world by rejecting Lady Scatcherd's bank-note. However, he also had had his triumphs since that. He had smiled scornfully at Dr. Thorne when he had seen him in the Greshamsbury street; and had been able to tell, at twenty houses through the county, how Lady Arabella had at last been obliged to place herself in his hands. And he triumphed again when he found himself really standing by Sir Louis Scatcherd's bedside.

As for Lady Scatcherd she did not even show herself. She kept in her own little room, sending out Hannah to ask him up the stairs; and she only just got a peep at him through the door as she heard the medical creak of his shoes as he again descended.

We need say but little of his visit to Sir Louis. It mattered nothing now, whether it was Thorne, or Greyson, or Fillgrave. And Dr. Fillgrave knew that it mattered nothing; he had skill at least, for that;—and heart enough also to feel that he would fain have been relieved from his task;—would fain have left this patient in the hands even of Dr. Thorne.

The name which Joe had given to his master's illness was certainly not a false one. He did find Sir Louis "in the horrors." If any father have a son whose besetting sin is a passion for alcohol, let him take his child to the room of a drunkard when possessed by "the horrors." Nothing will cure him if not that.

I will not disgust my reader by attempting to describe the poor wretch in his misery; the sunken, but yet glaring eyes; the emaciated cheeks; the fallen mouth; the parched, sore lips; the face, now dry and hot, and then suddenly clammy with drops of perspiration; the shaking hand, and all but palsied limbs; and worse than this, the fearful mental efforts, and the struggles for drink;—struggles to which it is often necessary to give way.

Dr. Fillgrave soon knew what was to be the man's fate; but he did what he might to relieve it. There, in the one big, best bedroom, looking out to the north, lay Sir Louis Scatcherd, dying wretchedly. There, in the other big, best bedroom, looking out to the south, had died the other baronet about a twelvemonth since,

and each a victim to the same sin. To this had come the prosperity of the house of Scatcherd.

And then Dr. Fillgrave went on to Greshamsbury. It was a long day's work, both for himself and the horses; but then, the triumph of being dragged up that avenue compensated for both the expense and the labour. He always put on his sweetest smile as he came near the hall-door, and rubbed his hands in the most complaisant manner of which he knew. It was seldom that he saw any of the family but Lady Arabella; but then he desired to see none other, and when he left her in a good humour, was quite content to take his glass of sherry and eat his lunch by himself.

On this occasion, however, the servant at once asked him to go into the dining-room, and there he found himself in the presence of Frank Gresham. The fact was, that Lady Arabella, having at last decided, had sent for Dr. Thorne; and it had become necessary that some one should be instructed with the duty of informing Dr. Fillgrave. That some one must be the squire, or Frank. Lady Arabella would doubtless have preferred a messenger more absolutely friendly to her own side of the house; but such messenger there was none; she could not send Mr. Gagebee to see her doctor, and so, of two evils she chose the least.

"Dr. Fillgrave," said Frank, shaking hands with him very cordially as he came up, "my mother is so much obliged to you for all your care and anxiety on her behalf! And so, indeed, are we all."

The doctor shook hands with him very warmly. This little expression of a family feeling on his behalf was the more gratifying, as he had always thought that the males of the Greshamsbury family were still

wedded to that pseudo doctor, that half-apothecary who lived in the village.

"It has been awfully troublesome to you, coming over all this way, I am sure. Indeed, money could not pay for it; my mother feels that. It must cut up your time so much."

"Not at all, Mr. Gresham; not at all," said the Barchester doctor, rising up on his toes proudly as he spoke. "A person of your mother's importance, you know! I should be happy to go any distance to see her."

"Ah! but, Dr. Fillgrave, we cannot allow that."

"Mr. Gresham, don't mention it."

"Oh, yes; but I must," said Frank, who thought that he had done enough for civility, and was now anxious to come to the point. "The fact is, doctor, that we are very much obliged for what you have done; but, for the future, my mother thinks she can trust to such assistance as she can get here in the village."

Frank had been particularly instructed to be very careful how he mentioned Dr. Thorne's name, and, therefore, cleverly avoided it.

Get what assistance she wanted in the village! What words were those that he heard? "Mr. Gresham, eh,—hem,—perhaps I do not completely——" Yes, alas! he had completely understood what Frank had meant that he should understand. Frank desired to be civil, but he had no idea of beating unnecessarily about the bush on such an occasion as this.

"It 's by Sir Omicron Pie's advice, Dr. Fillgrave. You see, this man here"—and he nodded his head towards the doctor's house, being still anxious not

to pronounce the hideous name—"has known my mother's constitution for so many years."

"Oh, Mr. Gresham; of course;—if it is wished."

"Yes, Dr. Fillgrave, it is wished. Lunch is coming directly," and Frank rang the bell.

"Nothing, I thank you, Mr. Gresham."

"Do take a glass of sherry."

"Nothing at all, I am very much obliged to you."

"Won't you let the horses get some oats?"

"I will return at once, if you please, Mr. Gresham." And the doctor did return, taking with him, on this occasion, the fee that was offered to him. His experience had at any rate taught him so much.

But though Frank could do this for Lady Arabella, he could not receive Dr. Thorne on her behalf. The bitterness of that interview had to be borne by herself. A messenger had been sent for him, and he was upstairs with her ladyship while his rival was receiving his congé downstairs. She had two objects to accomplish, if it might be possible; she had found that high words with the doctor were of no avail; but it might be possible that Frank could be saved by humiliation on her part. If she humbled herself before this man, would he consent to acknowledge that his niece was not the fit bride for the heir of Greshamsbury?

The doctor entered the room where she was lying on her sofa, and walking up to her with a gentle, but yet not constrained step, took the seat beside her little table, just as he had always been accustomed to do, and as though there had been no break in their intercourse. "Well, doctor, you see that I have come back to you," she said, with a faint smile.

"Or, rather, I have come back to you. And, be-

lieve me, Lady Arabella, I am very happy to do so. There need be no excuses. You were, doubtless, right to try what other skill could do; and I hope it has not been tried in vain."

She had meant to have been so condescending; but now all that was put quite beyond her power. It was not easy to be condescending to the doctor. She had been trying it all her life, and had never succeeded.

"I have had Sir Omicron Pie," she said.

"So I was glad to hear. Sir Omicron is a clever man, and has a good name. I always recommend Sir Omicron myself."

"And Sir Omicron returns the compliment," said she, smiling gracefully, "for he recommends you. He told Mr. Gresham that I was very foolish to quarrel with my best friend. So now we are friends again, are we not? You see how selfish I am." And she put out her hand to him.

The doctor took her hand cordially, and assured her that he bore her no ill-will; that he fully understood her conduct,—and that he had never accused her of selfishness. This was all very well and very gracious; but, nevertheless, Lady Arabella felt that the doctor kept the upper hand in those sweet forgivenesses. Whereas, she had intended to keep the upper hand, at least for a while, so that her humiliation might be the more effective when it did come.

And then the doctor used his surgical lore, as he well knew how to use it. There was an assured confidence about him, and an air which seemed to declare that he really knew what he was doing. These were very comfortable to his patients, but they were wanting in Dr. Fillgrave. When he had completed his examina-

tions and questions, and she had completed her little details and made her answer, she certainly was more at ease than she had been since the doctor had last left her.

"Don't go yet for a moment," she said. "I have one word to say to you."

He declared that he was not the least in a hurry. He desired nothing better, he said, than to sit there and talk to her. "And I owe you a most sincere apology, Lady Arabella."

"A sincere apology!" said she, becoming a little red. Was he going to say anything about Mary; was he going to own that he, and Mary, and Frank had all been wrong?

"Yes, indeed. I ought not to have brought Sir Louis Scatcherd here. I ought to have known that he would have disgraced himself."

"Oh, it does not signify!" said her ladyship, in a tone almost of disappointment. "I had forgotten. Mr. Gresham and you had more inconvenience than we had."

"He is an unfortunate, wretched man,—most unfortunate; with an immense fortune which he can never live to possess."

"And who will the money go to, doctor?"

This was a question for which Dr. Thorne was hardly prepared. "Go to?" he repeated. "Oh, some member of the family, I believe. There are plenty of nephews and nieces."

"Yes; but will it be divided, or all go to one?"

"Probably to one, I think. Sir Roger had a strong idea of leaving it all in one hand." If it should happen to be a girl, thought Lady Arabella, what an ex-

cellent opportunity would that be for Frank to marry money!

"And now, doctor, I want to say one word to you. Considering the very long time that we have known each other, it is better that I should be open with you. This estrangement between us and dear Mary has given us all so much pain. Cannot we do anything to put an end to it?"

"Well; what can I say, Lady Arabella? That depends so wholly on yourself."

"If it depends on me, it shall be done at once."

The doctor bowed; and though he could hardly be said to do so stiffly, he did it coldly. His bow seemed to say, "Certainly, if you choose to make a proper amende, it can be done; but I think it is very unlikely that you will do so."

"Beatrice is just going to be married, you know that, doctor." The doctor said that he did know it. "And it will be so pleasant that Mary should make one of us. Poor Beatrice; you don't know what she has suffered?"

"Yes," said the doctor, "there has been suffering, I am sure; suffering on both sides."

"You cannot wonder that we should be anxious about Frank, Dr. Thorne; an only son, and the heir to an estate that has been so very long in the family;" and Lady Arabella put her handkerchief to her eyes, as though these facts were in themselves melancholy, and not to be thought of by a mother without some soft tears. "Now I wish you could tell me what your views are, in a friendly manner, between ourselves. You won't find me unreasonable."

"My views, Lady Arabella?"

"Yes, doctor; about your niece, you know. You must have views of some sort; that 's of course. It occurs to me, that perhaps we are all in the dark together. If so, a little candid speaking between you and me may set it all right."

Lady Arabella's career had not hitherto been conspicuous for candour, as far as Dr. Thorne had been able to judge of it; but that was no reason why he should not respond to so very becoming an invitation on her part. He had no objection to a little candid speaking; at least, so he declared. As to his views with regard to Mary, they were merely these; that he would make her as happy and comfortable as he could while she remained with him; and that he would give her his blessing,—for he had nothing else to give her, —when she left him,—if ever she should do so.

Now, it will be said that the doctor was not very candid in this; not more so, perhaps, than was Lady Arabella herself. But when one is specially invited to be candid, one is naturally set upon one's guard. Those who by disposition are most open, are apt to become crafty when so admonished. When a man says to you, "Let us be candid with each other," you feel instinctively that he desires to squeeze you without giving a drop of water himself.

"Yes; but about Frank," said Lady Arabella.

"About Frank!" said the doctor, with an innocent look, which her ladyship could hardly interpret.

"What I mean is this—can you give me your word that these young people do not intend to do anything rash? One word like that from you will set my mind quite at rest. And then we could all be so happy together again."

"Ah! who is to answer for what rash things a young man will do?" said the doctor, smiling.

Lady Arabella got up from the sofa, and pushed away the little table. The man was false, hypocritical, and cunning. Nothing could be made of him. They were all in a conspiracy together to rob her of her son; —to make him marry without money! What should she do? Where should she turn for advice or counsel? She had nothing more to say to the doctor; and he, perceiving that this was the case, took his leave. This little attempt to achieve candour had not succeeded.

Dr. Thorne had answered Lady Arabella as had seemed best to him on the spur of the moment; but he was by no means satisfied with himself. As he walked away through the gardens, he bethought himself whether it would be better for all parties if he could bring himself to be really candid. Would it not be better for him at once to tell the squire what were the future prospects of his niece, and let the father agree to the marriage, or not agree to it, as he might think fit. But then, if so, if he did do this, would he not in fact say, "There is my niece; there is this girl of whom you have been talking for the last twelvemonth, indifferent as to what agony of mind you may have occasioned to her; there she is, a probable heiress? It may be worth your son's while to wait a little time, and not cast her off till he shall know whether she be an heiress or no? If it shall turn out that she is rich, let him take her. If not, why, he can desert her then as well as now?" He could not bring himself to put his niece into such a position as this. He was anxious enough that she should be Frank Gresham's wife, for he loved Frank Gresham. He was

anxious enough, also, that she should give to her husband the means of saving the property of his family. But Frank, though he might find her rich, was bound to take her while she was poor.

Then, also, he doubted whether he would be justified in speaking of this will at all. He almost hated the will for the trouble and vexation it had given him, and the constant stress it had laid on his conscience. He had spoken of it as yet to no one, and he thought that he was resolved not to do so while Sir Louis should yet be in the land of the living.

On reaching home, he found a note from Lady Scatcherd, informing him that Dr. Fillgrave had once more been at Boxall Hill, and that, on this occasion, he had left the house without anger.

"I don't know what he has said about Louis," she added, "for to tell the truth, doctor, I was afraid to see him. But he comes again to-morrow, and then I shall be braver. But I fear that my poor boy is in a bad way."

CHAPTER XVIII.

DR. THORNE WON'T INTERFERE.

At this period there was, as it were, a truce to the ordinary little skirmishes which had been so customary between Lady Arabella and the squire. Things had so fallen out that they neither of them had much spirit for a contest; and, moreover, on that point which at the present moment was most thought of by both of them, they were strangely in unison. For each of them was anxious to prevent the threatened marriage of their only son.

It must, moreover, be remembered, that Lady Arabella had carried a great point in ousting Mr. Yates Umbleby and putting the management of the estate into the hands of her own partisan. But then the squire had not done less in getting rid of Fillgrave and reinstating Dr. Thorne in possession of the family invalids. The losses, therefore, had been equal; the victories equal; and there was a mutual object.

And it must be confessed, also, that Lady Arabella's taste for grandeur was on the decline. Misfortune was coming too near to her to leave her much anxiety for the gaieties of a London season. Things were not faring well with her. When her eldest daughter was going to marry a man of fortune and a member of Parliament, she had thought nothing of demanding

a thousand pounds or so for the extraordinary expenses incident to such an occasion. But now, Beatrice was to become the wife of a parish parson, and even that was thought to be a fortunate event. She had, therefore, no heart for splendour.

"The quieter we can do it the better," she wrote, to her countess-sister. "Her father wanted to give him at least a thousand pounds; but Mr. Gagebee has told me confidentially that it literally cannot be done at the present moment! Ah, my dear Rosina! how things have been managed! If one or two of the girls will come over we shall all take it as a favour. Beatrice would think it very kind of them. But I don't think of asking you or Amelia." Amelia was always the grandest of the De Courcy family, being almost on an equality with,—nay, in some respects superior to,—the countess herself. But this, of course, was before the days of the nice place in Surrey.

Such, and so humble being the present temper of the lady of Greshamsbury, it will not be thought surprising that she and Mr. Gresham should at last come together in their efforts to reclaim their son. At first Lady Arabella urged upon the squire the duty of being very peremptory and very angry. "Do as other fathers do in such cases. Make him understand that he will have no allowance to live on."

"He understands that well enough," said Mr. Gresham.

"Threaten to cut him off with a shilling," said her ladyship, with spirit.

"I have n't a shilling to cut him off with," answered the squire, bitterly.

But Lady Arabella herself soon perceived that this

line would not do. As Mr. Gresham himself confessed, his own sins against his son had been too great to allow of his taking a high hand with him. Besides, Mr. Gresham was not a man who could be severe with a son whose individual conduct had been so good as Frank's. This marriage was, in his view, a misfortune to be averted if possible,—to be averted by any possible means; but, as far as Frank was concerned, it was to be regarded rather as a monomania than a crime.

"I did feel so certain that he would have succeeded with Miss Dunstable," said the mother, almost crying.

"I thought it impossible but that at his age a twelvemonth's knocking about the world would cure him," said the father.

"I never heard of a boy being so obstinate about a girl," said the mother. "I 'm sure he did n't get it from the De Courcys." Then, again, they talked it over in all its bearings.

"But what are they to live upon?" asked Lady Arabella, appealing, as it were, to some impersonation of reason. "That 's what I want him to tell me. What are they to live upon?"

"I wonder whether De Courcy could get him into some embassy?" said the father. "He does talk of a profession."

"What! with the girl and all?" asked Lady Arabella with horror, alarmed at the idea of such an appeal being made to her noble brother.

"No; but before he marries. He might be broken of it that way."

"Nothing will break him," said the wretched mother; "nothing—nothing. For my part, I think that he is

possessed. Why was she brought here? Oh, dear! oh, dear! Why was she ever brought into the house?"

This last question Mr. Gresham did not think it necessary to answer. That evil had been done, and it would be useless to dispute it. "I 'll tell you what I 'll do," said he. "I 'll speak to the doctor himself."

"It 's not the slightest use," said Lady Arabella. "He will not assist us. Indeed, I firmly believe it 's all his own doing."

"Oh, nonsense! that really is nonsense, my love."

"Very well, Mr. Gresham. What I say is always nonsense, I know. You have always told me so. But yet, see how things have turned out. I knew how it would be when she was first brought into the house." This assertion was rather a stretch on the part of Lady Arabella.

"Well, it is nonsense to say that Frank is in love with the girl at the doctor's bidding."

"I think you know, Mr. Gresham, that I don't mean that. What I say is this, that Dr. Thorne, finding what an easy fool Frank is——"

"I don't think he 's at all easy, my love; and he certainly is not a fool."

"Very well; have it your own way. I 'll not say a word more. I 'm struggling to do my best, and I 'm browbeaten on every side. God knows I am not in a state of health to bear it!" And Lady Arabella bowed her head into her pocket-handkerchief.

"I think, my dear, if you were to see Mary herself, it might do some good," said the squire, when the violence of his wife's grief had somewhat subsided.

"What! go and call upon this girl?"

"Yes; you can send Beatrice to give her notice,

you know. She never was unreasonable, and I do not think that you would find her so. You should tell her, you know——"

"Oh, I should know very well what to tell her, Mr. Gresham."

"Yes, my love; I 'm sure you would; nobody better. But what I mean is, that if you are to do any good, you should be kind in your manner. Mary Thorne has a spirit that you cannot break. You may perhaps lead, but nobody can drive her."

As this scheme originated with her husband, Lady Arabella could not, of course, confess that there was much in it. But, nevertheless, she determined to attempt it, thinking that if anything could be efficacious for good in their present misfortunes, it would be her own diplomatic powers. It was, therefore, at last settled between them, that he should endeavour to talk over the doctor, and then she would do the same with Mary.

"And then I will speak to Frank," said Lady Arabella. "As yet he has never had the audacity to open his mouth to me about Mary Thorne, though I believe he declares his love openly to every one else in the house."

"And I will get Oriel to speak to him," said the squire.

"I think Patience might do more good. I did once think he was getting fond of Patience, and I was quite unhappy about it then. Ah, dear! I should be almost pleased at that now."

And thus it was arranged that all the artillery of Greshamsbury was to be brought to bear at once on Frank's love, so as to crush it, as it were, by the very weight of metal.

It may be imagined that the squire would have less scruple in addressing the doctor on this matter than his wife would feel; and that his part of their present joint undertaking was less difficult than hers. For he and the doctor had ever been friends at heart. But, nevertheless, he did feel much scruple, as, with his stick in hand, he walked down to the little gate which opened out near the doctor's house.

This feeling was so strong, that he walked on beyond this door to the entrance, thinking of what he was going to do, and then back again. It seemed to be his fate to be depending always on the clemency or consideration of Dr. Thorne. At this moment the doctor was imposing the only obstacle which was offered to the sale of a great part of his estate. Sir Louis, through his lawyer, was pressing the doctor to sell, and the lawyer was loudly accusing the doctor of delaying to do so. "He has the management of your property," said Mr. Finney; "but he manages it in the interest of his own friend. It is quite clear, and we will expose it." "By all means," said Sir Louis. "It is a d—— shame, and it shall be exposed." Of all this the squire was aware.

When he reached the doctor's house he was shown into the drawing-room and found Mary there alone. It had always been his habit to kiss her forehead when he chanced to meet her about the house at Greshamsbury. She had been younger and more childish then; but even now she was but a child to him, so he kissed her as he had been wont to do. She blushed slightly as she looked up into his face, and said; "Oh, Mr. Gresham, I am so glad to see you here again!"

As he looked at her he could not but acknowledge

that it was natural that Frank should love her. He had never before seen that she was attractive; had never had an opinion about it. She had grown up as a child under his eye; and as she had not had the name of being especially a pretty child, he had never thought on the subject. Now he saw before him a woman whose every feature was full of spirit and animation; whose eyes sparkled with more than mere brilliancy; whose face was full of intelligence; whose very smile was eloquent. Was it to be wondered at that Frank should have learned to love her?

And then he knew how good she was. He knew well what was her nature; how generous, how open, how affectionate, and yet how proud! Her pride was her fault; but even that was not a fault in his eyes. Out of his own family there was no one whom he had loved, and could love, as he loved her. He felt and acknowledged that no man could have a better wife. And yet he was there with the express object of rescuing his son from such a marriage!

"You are looking very well, Mary," he said, almost involuntarily.

"Am I?" she answered, smiling. "It 's very nice to be complimented. Uncle never pays me any compliments of that sort."

In truth, she was looking well. She would say to herself over and over again, from morning to night, that Frank's love for her would be, must be, unfortunate; could not lead to happiness. But, nevertheless, it did make her happy. She had before his return made up her mind to be forgotten, and it was so sweet to find that he had been so far from forgetting her. A girl may scold a man in words for rashness in his love,

but her heart never scolds him for such offence as that. She had not been slighted, and her heart, therefore, still rose buoyant within her breast.

The doctor soon entered the room. As the squire's visit had been expected by him, he had of course not been out of the house. "And now I suppose I must go," said Mary; "for I know you are going to talk about business. But, uncle, Mr. Gresham says I 'm looking very well. Why have you not been able to find that out?"

"She 's a dear good girl," said the squire, as the door shut behind her; "a dear good girl;" and the doctor could not fail to see that his eyes were filled with tears.

"I think she is," said he, quietly. And then they both sat silent, as though each was waiting to hear whether the other had anything more to say on that subject. The doctor, at any rate, had nothing more to say.

"I have come here specially to speak to you about her," said the squire.

"About Mary?"

"Yes, doctor; about her and Frank. Something must be done, some arrangement made; if not for our sakes, at least for theirs."

"What arrangements, squire?"

"Ah, that is the question! I take it for granted that either Frank or Mary has told you that they have engaged themselves to each other."

"Frank told me so twelve months since."

"And has not Mary told you?"

"Not exactly that. But, never mind. She has, I believe, no secret from me. Though I have said but little to her, I think I know it all."

"Well, what then?" The doctor shook his head and put up his hands. He had nothing to say; no proposition to make; no arrangement to suggest. The thing was so, and he seemed to say that, as far as he was concerned, there was an end of it. The squire sat looking at him, hardly knowing how to proceed. It seemed to him, that the fact of a young man and a young lady being in love with each other was not a thing to be left to arrange itself, particularly, seeing the rank of life in which they were placed. But the doctor seemed to be of a different opinion. "But, Dr. Thorne, there is no man on God's earth who knows my affairs as well as you do; and in knowing mine, you know Frank's. Do you think it possible that they should marry each other?"

"Possible; yes, it is possible. You mean, will it be prudent?"

"Well, take it in that way; would it not be most imprudent?"

"At present, it certainly would be. I have never spoken to either of them on the subject; but I presume they do not think of such a thing for the present."

"But, doctor——" The squire was certainly taken aback by the coolness of the doctor's manner. After all, he, the squire, was Mr. Gresham of Greshamsbury, generally acknowledged to be the first commoner in Barsetshire. After all, Frank was his heir, and, in process of time, he would be Mr. Gresham of Greshamsbury. Crippled as the estate was, there would be something left, and the rank at any rate remained. But as to Mary, she was not even the doctor's daughter. She was not only penniless, but nameless, fatherless, worse than motherless! It was incredible

that Dr. Thorne, with his generally exalted ideas as to family, should speak in this cold way as to a projected marriage between the heir of Greshamsbury and his brother's bastard child! "But, doctor," repeated the squire.

The doctor put one leg over the other, and began to rub his calf. "Squire," said he, "I think I know all that you would say, all that you mean. And you don't like to say it, because you would not wish to pain me by alluding to Mary's birth."

"But, independently of that, what would they live on?" said the squire, energetically. "Birth is a great thing, a very great thing. You and I think exactly alike about that, so we need have no dispute. You are quite as proud of Ullathorne as I am of Greshamsbury."

"I might be if it belonged to me."

"But you are. It is no use arguing. But, putting that aside altogether, what would they live on? If they were to marry, what would they do? Where would they go? You know what Lady Arabella thinks of such things. Would it be possible that they should live up at the house with her? Besides, what a life would that be for both of them! Could they live here? Would that be well for them?" The squire looked at the doctor for an answer; but the doctor still went on rubbing his calf. Mr. Gresham, therefore, was constrained to continue his expostulation. "When I am dead there will still, I hope, be something;—something left for the poor fellow. Lady Arabella and the girls would be better off, perhaps, than now, and I sometimes wish, for Frank's sake, that the time had come."

The doctor could not now go on rubbing his leg.

He was moved to speak, and declared that, of all events, that was the one which would be furthest from Frank's heart. "I know no son," said he, "who loves his father more dearly than he does."

"I do believe it," said the squire; "I do believe it. But yet, I cannot but feel that I am in his way."

"No, squire; no; you are in no one's way. You will find yourself happy with your son yet, and proud of him. And proud of his wife, too. I hope so, and I think so: I do, indeed, or I should not say so, squire; we will have many a happy day yet together, when we shall talk of all these things over the dining-room fire at Greshamsbury."

The squire felt it kind in the doctor that he should thus endeavour to comfort him; but he could not understand, and did not inquire, on what basis these golden hopes were founded. It was necessary, however, to return to the subject which he had come to discuss. Would the doctor assist him in preventing this marriage? That was now the one thing necessary to be kept in view. "But, doctor, about the young people; of course they cannot marry; you are aware of that."

"I don't know that exactly."

"Well, doctor, I must say I thought you would feel it."

"Feel what, squire?"

"That, situated as they are, they ought not to marry."

"That is quite another question. I have said nothing about that either to you or to anybody else. The truth is, squire, I have never interfered in this matter one way or the other; and I have no wish to do so now."

"But should you not interfere? Is not Mary the same to you as your own child?"

Dr. Thorne hardly knew how to answer this. He was aware that his argument about not interfering was in fact absurd. Mary could not marry without his interference; and had it been the case that she was in danger of making an improper marriage, of course he would interfere. His meaning was, that he would not at the present moment express any opinion; he would not declare against a match which might turn out to be in every way desirable; nor, if he spoke in favour of it, could he give his reasons for doing so. Under these circumstances, he would have wished to say nothing, could that only have been possible.

But as it was not possible, and as he must say something, he answered the squire's last question by asking another. "What is your objection, squire?"

"Objection! Why, what on earth would they live on?"

"Then I understand, that if that difficulty were over, you would not refuse your consent merely because of Mary's birth?"

This was a manner in which the squire had by no means expected to have the affair presented to him. It seemed so impossible that any sound-minded man should take any but his view of the case, that he had not prepared himself for argument. There was every objection to his son and heir marrying Miss Thorne; but the fact of their having no income whatever between them, did certainly justify him in alleging that first.

"But that difficulty can't be got over, doctor. You know, however, that it would be cause of grief to us

all to see Frank marry much beneath his station;—that is, I mean in family. You should not press me to say this, for you know that I love Mary dearly."

"But, my dear friend, it is necessary. Wounds sometimes must be opened in order that they may be healed. What I mean is this;—and, squire, I 'm sure I need not say to you that I hope for an honest answer,—were Mary Thorne an heiress,—had she, for instance, such wealth as that Miss Dunstable that we hear of,—in that case would you object to the match?"

When the doctor declared that he expected an honest answer the squire listened with all his ears; but the question, when finished, seemed to have no bearing on the present case.

"Come, squire, speak your mind faithfully. There was some talk once of Frank's marrying Miss Dunstable; did you mean to object to that match?"

"Miss Dunstable was legitimate. At least, I presume so."

"Oh, Mr. Gresham! has it come to that? Miss Dunstable, then, would have satisfied your ideas of high birth?"

Mr. Gresham was rather posed, and regretted, at the moment, his allusion to Miss Dunstable's presumed legitimacy. But he soon recovered himself. "No," said he, "it would not. And I am willing to admit, as I have admitted before, that the undoubted advantages arising from wealth are taken by the world as atoning for what would otherwise be a mésalliance. But——"

"You admit that, do you? You acknowledge that as your conviction on the subject?"

"Yes. But——" The squire was going on to ex-

plain the propriety of this opinion, but the doctor uncivilly would not hear him.

"Then, squire, I will not interfere in this matter in one way or the other."

"How on earth can such an opinion——"

"Pray excuse me, Mr. Gresham; but my mind is now quite made up. It was very nearly so before. I will do nothing to encourage Frank, nor will I say anything to discourage Mary."

"That is the most singular resolution that a man of sense like you ever came to."

"I can't help it, squire. It is my resolution."

"But what has Miss Dunstable's fortune to do with it?"

"I cannot say that it has anything; but, in this matter, I will not interfere."

The squire went on for some time, but it was all to no purpose; and at last he left the house, considerably in dudgeon. The only conclusion to which he could come was, that Dr. Thorne had thought the chance on his niece's behalf too good to be thrown away, and had, therefore, resolved to act in this very singular way. "I would not have believed it of him, though all Barsetshire had told me," he said to himself as he entered the great gates; and he went on repeating the same words till he found himself in his own room. "No, not if all Barsetshire had told me!" He did not, however, communicate the ill result of his visit to the Lady Arabella.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT CAN YOU GIVE IN RETURN?

In spite of the family troubles, these were happy days for Beatrice. It so seldom happens that young ladies on the eve of their marriage have their future husbands living near them! This happiness was hers, and Mr. Oriel made the most of it. She was constantly being coaxed down to the parsonage by Patience, in order that she might give her opinion, in private, as to some domestic arrangement, some piece of furniture, or some new carpet;—but this privacy was always invaded. What Mr. Oriel's parishioners did in these halcyon days I will not ask. His morning services, however, had been altogether given up, and he had provided himself with a very excellent curate.

But one grief did weigh heavily on Beatrice. She continually heard her mother say things which made her feel that it would be more than ever impossible that Mary should be at her wedding; and yet she had promised her brother to ask her. Frank had also repeated his threat, that if Mary were not present he would absent himself.

Beatrice did what most girls do in such a case;—what all would do who are worth anything: she asked her lover's advice.

"Oh, but Frank can't be in earnest!" said the lover. "Of course he 'll be at our wedding."

"You don't know him, Caleb. He is so changed that no one hardly would know him. You can't conceive how much in earnest he is,—how determined and resolute. And then, I should like to have Mary so much if mamma would let her come."

"Ask Lady Arabella," said Caleb.

"Well, I suppose I must do that; but I know what she 'll say, and Frank will never believe that I have done my best." Mr. Oriel comforted her with such little whispered consolations as he was able to afford, and then she went away on her errand to her mother.

She was indeed surprised at the manner in which her prayer was received. She could hardly falter forth her petition; but when she had done so, Lady Arabella answered in this wise;—"Well, my dear, I have no objection, none in the least; that is, of course, if Mary is disposed to behave herself properly."

"Oh, mamma! of course she will," said Beatrice; "she always did and always does."

"I hope she will, my love. But, Beatrice, when I say that I shall be glad to see her,—of course I mean under certain conditions. I never disliked Mary Thorne, and if she would only let Frank understand that she will not listen to his mad proposals I should be delighted to see her at Greshamsbury just as she used to be."

Beatrice could say nothing in answer to this; but she felt very sure that Mary, let her intention be what it might, would not undertake to make Frank understand anything at anybody's bidding.

"I will tell you what I will do, my dear," continued Lady Arabella; "I will call on Mary myself."

"What! at Dr. Thorne's house?"

"Yes; why not? I have been at Dr. Thorne's house before now." And Lady Arabella could not but think of her last visit thither, and the strong feeling she had, as she came out, that she would never again enter those doors. She was, however, prepared to do anything on behalf of her rebellious son.

"Oh, yes! I know that, mamma."

"I will call upon her, and if I can possibly manage it I will ask her myself to make one of your party. If so, you can go to her afterwards and make your own arrangements. Just write her a note, my dear, and say that I shall call to-morrow at twelve. It might fluster her if I were to go in without notice."

Beatrice did as she was bid, but with a presentiment that no good would come of it. The note was certainly unnecessary for the purpose assigned by Lady Arabella, as Mary was not given to be flustered by such occurrences; but, perhaps, it was as well that it was written, as it enabled her to make up her mind steadily as to what information should be given, and what should not be given to her coming visitor.

On the next morning, at the appointed hour, Lady Arabella walked down to the doctor's house. She never walked about the village without making some little disturbance among its inhabitants. With the squire, himself, they were quite familiar, and he could appear and reappear without creating any sensation; but her ladyship had not made herself equally common in men's sight. Therefore, when she went in at the doctor's little gate, the fact was known through all

Greshamsbury in ten minutes, and before she had left the house, Mrs. Umbleby and Miss Gushing had quite settled between them what was the exact cause of the very singular event.

The doctor, when he had heard what was going to happen, carefully kept out of the way. Mary, therefore, had the pleasure of receiving Lady Arabella alone. Nothing could exceed her ladyship's affability. Mary thought that it perhaps might have savoured less of condescension; but then, on this subject, Mary was probably prejudiced. Lady Arabella smiled and simpered, and asked after the doctor, and the cat, and Janet, and said everything that could have been desired by any one less unreasonable than Mary Thorne.

"And now, Mary, I 'll tell you why I have called." Mary bowed her head slightly, as much as to say, that she would be glad to receive any information which Lady Arabella could give her on that subject. "Of course you know that Beatrice is going to be married very shortly." Mary acknowledged that she had heard so much. "Yes: we think it will be in September,—early in September,—and that is coming very soon now. The poor girl is anxious that you should be at her wedding." Mary turned slightly red; but she merely said, and that somewhat too coldly, that she was much indebted to Beatrice for her kindness.

"I can assure you, Mary, that she is very fond of you,—as much so as ever; and so, indeed, am I, and all of us are so. You know that Mr. Gresham was always your friend."

"Yes, he always was, and I am grateful to Mr. Gresham," answered Mary. It was well for Lady Arabella that she had her temper under command, for

had she spoken her mind out there would have been very little chance left for reconciliation between her and Mary.

"Yes, indeed he was; and I think we all did what little we could to make you welcome at Greshamsbury, till those unpleasant occurrences took place."

"What occurrences, Lady Arabella?"

"And Beatrice is so very anxious on this point," said her ladyship, ignoring for the moment Mary's question. "You two have been so much together, that she feels she cannot be quite happy if you are not near her when she is being married."

"Dear Beatrice!" said Mary, warmed for the moment to an expression of genuine feeling.

"She came to me yesterday, begging that I would waive any objection I might have to you being there. I have made her no answer yet. What answer do you think I ought to make her?"

Mary was astounded at this question, and hesitated in her reply. "What answer ought you to make her?" she said.

"Yes, Mary. What answer do you think I ought to give. I wish to ask you the question, as you are the person the most concerned."

Mary considered for a while, and then did give her opinion on the matter in a firm voice. "I think you should tell Beatrice, that as you cannot at present receive me cordially in your house, it will be better that you should not be called on to receive me at all."

This was certainly not the sort of answer that Lady Arabella expected, and she was now somewhat astounded in her turn. "But, Mary," she said, "I should be delighted to receive you cordially if I could do so."

"But it seems you cannot, Lady Arabella; and so there must be an end of it."

"Oh, but I do not know that:" and she smiled her sweetest smile. "I do not know that. I want to put an end to all this ill-feeling if I can. It all depends upon one thing, you know."

"Does it, Lady Arabella?"

"Yes, upon one thing. You won't be angry if I ask you another question;—eh, Mary?"

"No; at least, I don't think I will."

"Is there any truth in what we hear about your being engaged to Frank?" Mary made no immediate answer to this, but sat quite silent, looking Lady Arabella in the face; not but that she had made up her mind as to what answer she would give, but the exact words failed her at the moment. "Of course you must have heard of such a rumour," continued Lady Arabella.

"Oh, yes, I have heard of it."

"Yes, and you have noticed it, and I must say very properly;—when you went to Boxall Hill, and before that with Miss Oriel to her aunt's, I thought you behaved extremely well." Mary felt herself glow with indignation, and began to prepare words that should be sharp and decisive. "But, nevertheless, people talk; and Frank, who is still quite a boy,"—Mary's indignation was not softened by this allusion to Frank's folly,—"seems to have got some nonsense in his head. I grieve to say it, but I feel myself in justice bound to do so, that in this matter he has not acted as well as you have done. Now, therefore, I merely ask you whether there is any truth in the report. If you tell me that there is none, I shall be quite contented."

"But it is altogether true, Lady Arabella. I am engaged to Frank Gresham."

"Engaged to be married to him?"

"Yes; engaged to be married to him."

What was she to say or to do now? Nothing could be more plain, more decided, or less embarrassed with doubt than Mary's declaration. And as she made it she looked her visitor full in the face, blushing indeed, for her cheeks were now suffused as well as her forehead; but boldly, and, as it were, with defiance.

"And you tell me so to my face, Miss Thorne?"

"And why not? Did you not ask me the question; and would you have me answer you with a falsehood? I am engaged to him. As you would put the question to me, what other answer could I make? The truth is, that I am engaged to him?"

The decisive abruptness with which Mary declared her own iniquity almost took away her ladyship's breath. She had certainly believed that they were engaged, and had hardly hoped that Mary would deny it; but she had not expected that the crime would be acknowledged, or, at any rate, if acknowledged, that the confession would be made without some show of shame. On this Lady Arabella could have worked; but there was no such expression, nor was there the slightest hesitation. "I am engaged to Frank Gresham," and having so said, Mary looked her visitor full in the face.

"Then it is indeed impossible that you should be received at Greshamsbury."

"At present, quite so, no doubt: in saying so, Lady Arabella, you only repeat the answer I made to your first question. I can now go to Greshamsbury only

in one light: that of Mr. Gresham's accepted daughter-in-law."

"And that is perfectly out of the question; altogether out of the question, now and for ever."

"I will not dispute with you about that; but, as I said before, my being at Beatrice's wedding is not to be thought of."

Lady Arabella sat for a while silent, that she might meditate, if possible, calmly as to what line of argument she had now better take. It would be foolish in her, she thought, to return home, having merely expressed her anger. She had now an opportunity of talking to Mary which might not again occur: the difficulty was in deciding in what special way she should use the opportunity. Should she threaten, or should she entreat? To do her justice, it should be stated, that she did actually believe that the marriage was all but impossible; she did not think that it could take place. But the engagement might be the ruin of her son's prospects, seeing how he had before him one imperative, one immediate duty—that of marrying money.

Having considered all this as well as her hurry would allow her, she determined first to reason, then to entreat, and lastly, if necessary, to threaten.

"I am astonished. You cannot be surprised at that, Miss Thorne. I am astonished at hearing so singular a confession made."

"Do you think my confession is singular, or the fact of my being engaged to your son?"

"We will pass over that for the present. But do let me ask you, do you think it possible,—I say possible,—that you and Frank should be married?"

"Oh, certainly; quite possible."

"Of course you know that he has not a shilling in the world."

"Nor have I, Lady Arabella."

"Nor will he have were he to do anything so utterly hostile to his father's wishes. The property, you are aware, is altogether at Mr. Gresham's disposal."

"I am aware of nothing about the property, and can say nothing about it except this, that it has not been, and will not be inquired after by me in this matter. If I marry Frank Gresham, it will not be for the property. I am sorry to make such an apparent boast, but you force me to do it."

"On what, then, are you to live? You are too old for love in a cottage, I suppose?"

"Not at all too old. Frank, you know, is 'still quite a boy.'"

Impudent hussy! forward, ill-conditioned, saucy minx! such were the epithets which rose to Lady Arabella's mind; but she politically suppressed them. "Miss Thorne, this subject is of course to me very serious;—very ill-adapted for jesting. I look upon such a marriage as absolutely impossible."

"I do not know what you mean by impossible, Lady Arabella."

"I mean, in the first place, that you two could not get yourselves married."

"Oh, yes. Mr. Oriel would manage that for us. We are his parishioners, and he would be bound to do it."

"I beg your pardon;—I believe that under all the circumstances it would be illegal." Mary smiled; but she said nothing. "You may laugh, Miss Thorne, but I think you will find that I am right. There are still

laws to prevent such fearful distress as would be brought about by such a marriage."

"I hope that nothing I shall do will bring distress on the family."

"Ah, but it would. Don't you know that it would? Think of it, Miss Thorne. Think of Frank's state, and of his father's state. You know enough of that, I am sure, to be well aware that Frank is not in a condition to marry without money. Think of the position which Mr. Gresham's only son should hold in the county; think of the old name, and the pride we have in it. You have lived among us enough to understand all this; think of these things, and then say whether it is possible such a marriage should take place without family distress of the deepest kind. Think of Mr. Gresham. If you truly love my son, you could not wish to bring on him all this misery and ruin."

Mary now was touched, for there was truth in what Lady Arabella said. But she had no power of going back. Her troth was plighted, and nothing that any human being could say should shake her from it. If he, indeed, chose to repent, that would be another thing. "Lady Arabella," she said, "I have nothing to say in favour of this engagement, except that he wishes it."

"And is that a reason, Mary?"

"To me it is;—not only a reason, but a law. I have given him my promise."

"And you will keep your promise even to his own ruin?"

"I hope not. Our engagement, unless he shall choose to break it off, must necessarily be a long one; but the time will come——"

"What! when Mr. Gresham is dead?"

"Before that, I hope."

"There is no probability of it. And because he is headstrong, you, who have always had credit for so much sense, will hold him to this mad engagement?"

"No, Lady Arabella. I will not hold him to anything to which he does not wish to be held. Nothing that you can say shall move me. Nothing that anybody can say shall induce me to break my promise to him. But a word from himself will do it. One look will be sufficient. Let him give me to understand, in any way, that his love for me is injurious to him,—that he has learnt to think so,—and then I will renounce my part in this engagement as quickly as you could wish it."

There was much in this promise, but still not so much as Lady Arabella wished to get. Mary, she knew, was obstinate, but yet reasonable. Frank, she thought, was both obstinate and unreasonable. It might be possible to work on Mary's reason, but quite impossible to touch Frank's irrationality. So she persevered,—foolishly.

"Miss Thorne,—that is, Mary, for I still wish to be thought your friend."

"I will tell you the truth, Lady Arabella. For some considerable time past I have not thought you so."

"Then you have wronged me. But I will go on with what I was saying. You quite acknowledge that this is a foolish affair?"

"I acknowledge no such thing."

"Something very much like it. You have not a word in its defence."

"Not to you. I do not choose to be put on my defence by you."

"I don't know who has more right. However, you promise that if Frank wishes it, you will release him from his engagement."

"Release him! It is for him to release me;—that is, if he wishes it."

"Very well; at any rate, you give him permission to do so. But will it not be more honourable for you to begin!"

"No; I think not."

"Ah, but it would! If he, in his position, should be the first to speak, the first to suggest that this affair between you is a foolish one, what would people say?"

"They would say the truth."

"And what would you yourself say?"

"Nothing."

"What would he think of himself?"

"Ah, that I do not know! It is according as that may be, that he will or will not act at your bidding."

"Exactly; and because you know him to be high-minded, because you think that he, having so much to give, will not break his word to you,—to you who have nothing to give in return,—it is, therefore, that you say that the first step must be taken by him. Is that noble?"

Then Mary rose from her seat, for it was no longer possible for her to speak what it was in her to say, sitting there leisurely on her sofa. Lady Arabella's worship of money had not hitherto been so brought forward in the conversation as to give her unpardonable offence; but now she felt that she could no longer restrain her indignation. "To you who have nothing to

give in return!" Had she not given all that she possessed? Had she not emptied her store into his lap? —that heart of hers, beating with such genuine life, capable of such perfect love, throbbing with so grand a pride; had she not given that? And was not that, between him and her, more than twenty Greshamsburys, nobler than any pedigree? "To you who have nothing to give," indeed! This to her who was so ready to give everything!

"Lady Arabella," she said, "I think that you do not understand me, and that it is not likely that you should. If so, our further talking will be worse than useless. I have taken no account of what will be given between your son and me in your sense of the word 'giving.' But he has professed to—love me;" —as she spoke, she still looked on the lady's face, but her eyelashes for a moment screened her eyes, and her colour was a little heightened;—"and I have acknowledged that I also love him; and so we were engaged. To me my promise is sacred. I will not be threatened into breaking it. If, however, he shall wish to change his mind he can do so. I will not upbraid him;—will not, if I can help it, think harshly of him. So much you may tell him if it suits you. But I will not listen to your calculations as to how much or how little each of us may have to give to the other."

She was still standing when she finished speaking, and so she continued to stand. Her eyes were fixed on Lady Arabella, and her position seemed to say that sufficient words had been spoken, and that it was time that her ladyship should go. And so Lady Arabella felt it. Gradually she also rose. Slowly, but tacitly she acknowledged that she was in the presence of

a spirit superior to her own; and so she took her leave.

"Very well," she said, in a tone that was intended to be grandiloquent, but which failed grievously; "I will tell him that he has your permission to think a second time on this matter. I do not doubt but that he will do so." Mary would not condescend to answer, but curtsied low as her visitor left the room. And so the interview was over.

The interview was over, and Mary was alone. She remained standing as long as she heard the footsteps of Frank's mother on the stairs; not immediately thinking of what had passed, but still buoying herself up with her hot indignation, as though her work with Lady Arabella was not yet finished. But when the footfall was no longer heard, and the sound of the closing door told her that she was in truth alone, she sank back in her seat, and, covering her face with her hands, burst into bitter tears.

All that doctrine about money was horrible to her; —that insolent pretence that she had caught at Frank because of his worldly position made her all but ferocious; but Lady Arabella had not the less spoken much that was true. She did think of the position which the heir of Greshamsbury should hold in the county, and of the fact that a marriage would mar that position so vitally; she did think of the old name, and the old Gresham pride; she did think of the squire and his deep distress. It was true that she had lived among them long enough to understand these things, and to know that it was not possible that this marriage should take place without deep family sorrow.

And then she asked herself whether, in consenting to

accept Frank's hand, she had adequately considered this; and she was forced to acknowledge that she had not considered it. She had ridiculed Lady Arabella for saying that Frank was still a boy; but was it not true that his offer had been made with a boy's energy, rather than a man's forethought? If so,—if she had been wrong to accede to that offer when made, would she not be doubly wrong to hold him to it now that she saw their error?

It was doubtless true that Frank himself could not be the first to draw back. What would people say of him? She could now calmly ask herself the question that had so angered her when asked by Lady Arabella. If he could not do it, and if, nevertheless, it behoved them to break off this match, by whom was it to be done if not by her? Was not Lady Arabella right throughout, right in her conclusions, though so foully wrong in her manner of drawing them?

And then she did think for one moment of herself. "You who have nothing to give in return!" Such had been Lady Arabella's main accusation against her. Was it in fact true that she had nothing to give? Her maiden love, her feminine pride, her very life, and spirit, and being. Were these things nothing? Were they to be weighed against pounds sterling per annum? And, when so weighed, were they ever to kick the beam like feathers? All these things had been nothing to her when, without reflection, governed wholly by the impulse of a moment, she had first allowed his daring hand to lie for an instant in her own. She had thought nothing of these things when the other suitor came, richer far than Frank, to love whom it was as impossible to her as it was not to love him.

Her love had been pure from all such thoughts. She was conscious that it ever would be pure. Lady Arabella was unable to comprehend this, and therefore was Lady Arabella so utterly distasteful to her.

Frank had once held her close to his warm breast; and her very soul had thrilled with joy to feel that he so loved her,—with a joy which she had hardly dared to acknowledge. At that moment, her maidenly efforts had been made to push him off, but her heart had grown to his. She had acknowledged him to be master of her spirit; her bosom's lord; the man whom she had been born to worship; the human being to whom it was for her to link her destiny. Frank's acres had been of no account;—nor had his want of acres. God had brought them two together that they should love each other. That conviction had satisfied her, and she had made it a duty to herself that she would love him with her very soul. And now she was called upon to wrench herself asunder from him because she had nothing to give in return!

Well; she would wrench herself asunder, as far as such wrenching might be done compatibly with her solemn promise. It might be right that Frank should have an opportunity offered him, so that he might escape from his position without disgrace. She would endeavour to give him this opportunity. So, with one deep sigh, she arose, took to herself pen, ink, and paper, and sat herself down again so that the wrenching might begin.

And then, for a moment, she thought of her uncle. Why had he not spoken to her of all this? Why had he not warned her? He who had ever been so good to her, why had he now failed her so grievously? She

had told him everything, had had no secret from him; but he had never answered her a word. "He also must have known," she said to herself, piteously; "he also must have known that I could give nothing in return." Such accusation, however, availed her not at all, so she sat down and slowly wrote her letter.

"Dearest Frank," she began. She had at first written "Dear Mr. Gresham;" but her heart revolted against such useless coldness. She was not going to pretend she did not love him.

"Dearest Frank,—Your mother has been here talking to me about our engagement. I do not generally agree with her about such matters; but she has said some things to-day which I cannot but acknowledge to be true. She says, that our marriage would be distressing to your father, injurious to all your family, and ruinous to yourself. If this be so, how can I, who love you, wish for such a marriage?

"I remember my promise, and have kept it. I would not yield to your mother when she desired me to disclaim our engagement. But I do think it will be more prudent if you will consent to forget all that has passed between us;—not, perhaps, to forget it; that may not be possible for us;—but to let it pass by as though it had never been. If so, if you think so, dear Frank, do not have scruples on my account. What will be best for you, must be best for me. Think what a reflection it would ever be to me, to have been the ruin of one that I love so well!

"Let me have but one word to say that I am released from my promise, and I will tell my uncle that the matter between us is over. It will be painful for

us at first. Those occasional meetings which must take place will distress us; but that will wear off. We shall always think well of each other, and why should we not be friends? This, doubtless, cannot be done without inward wounds. But such wounds are in God's hands, and He can cure them.

"I know what your first feelings will be on reading this letter; but do not answer it in obedience to first feelings. Think over it; think of your father, and all you owe him; of your old name, your old family, and of what the world expects from you." Mary was forced to put her hand to her eyes, to save her paper from her falling tears, as she found herself thus repeating, nearly word for word, the arguments that had been used by Lady Arabella. "Think of these things, coolly, if you can, but, at any rate, without passion; and then let me have one word in answer. One word will suffice.

"I have but to add this; do not allow yourself to think that my heart will ever reproach you. It cannot reproach you for doing that which I myself suggest." Mary's logic in this was very false; but she was not herself aware of it. "I will never reproach you either in word or thought; and as for all others, it seems to me that the world agrees that we have hitherto been wrong. The world, I hope, will be satisfied when we have obeyed it.

"God bless you, dearest Frank! I shall never call you so again; but it would be a pretence were I to write otherwise in this letter. Think of this, and let me have one line.

"Your affectionate friend,

"Mary Thorne."

"P.S.—Of course I cannot be at dear Beatrice's marriage; but when they come back to the parsonage I shall see her. I am sure they will both be happy, because they are so good. I need hardly say that I shall think of them on their wedding-day."

When she had finished her letter, she addressed it plainly, in her own somewhat bold handwriting, to Francis N. Gresham, Jun., Esq., and then took it herself to the little village post-office. There should be nothing underhand about her correspondence. All the Greshamsbury world should know of it,—that world of which she had spoken in her letter,—if that world so pleased. Having put her penny label on it, she handed it, with an open brow and an unembarrassed face, to the baker's wife, who was Her Majesty's postmistress at Greshamsbury; and, having so finished her work, she returned to see the table prepared for her uncle's dinner. "I will say nothing to him," said she to herself, "till I get the answer. He will not talk to me about it, so why should I trouble him?"

CHAPTER XX.

THE RACE OF SCATCHERD BECOMES EXTINCT.

It will not be imagined, at any rate by feminine readers, that Mary's letter was written off at once, without alterations and changes, or the necessity for a fair copy. Letters from one young lady to another are doubtless written in this manner, and even with them it might sometimes be better if more patience had been taken. But with Mary's first letter to her lover,—her first love-letter, if love-letter it can be called,—much more care was used. It was copied and re-copied, and when she returned from posting it, it was read and re-read.

"It is very cold," she said to herself. "He will think I have no heart; that I have never loved him!" And then she all but resolved to run down to the baker's wife, and get back her letter, that she might alter it. "But it will be better so," she said again. "If I touched his feelings now, he would never bring himself to leave me. It is right that I should be cold to him. I should be false to myself if I tried to move his love;—I, who have nothing to give him in return for it." And so she made no further visit to the post-office, and the letter went on its way.

We will follow its fortunes for a short while, and explain how it was that Mary received no answer for a

week;—a week, it may well be imagined, of terrible suspense to her. When she took it to the post-office, she doubtless thought that the baker's wife had nothing to do but to send it up to the house at Greshamsbury, and that Frank would receive it that evening, or, at latest, early on the following morning. But this was by no means so. The epistle was posted on a Friday afternoon, and it behoved the baker's wife to send it into Silverbridge,—Silverbridge being the post-town,—so that all due formalities, as ordered by the Queen's government, might there be perfected. Now, unfortunately, the postboy had taken his departure before Mary reached the shop, and it was not, therefore, despatched till Saturday. Sunday was always a dies non with the Greshamsbury Mercury, and, consequently Frank's letter was not delivered at the house till Monday morning;—at which time Mary had for two long days been waiting with weary heart for the expected answer.

Now Frank had on that morning gone up to London by the early train, with his future brother-in-law, Mr. Oriel. In order to accomplish this they had left Greshamsbury for Barchester exactly as the postboy was leaving Silverbridge for Greshamsbury.

"I should like to wait for my letters," Mr. Oriel had said, when the journey was being discussed.

"Nonsense," Frank had answered. "Who ever got a letter that was worth waiting for?" And so Mary was doomed to a week of misery.

When the post-bag arrived at the house on Monday morning, it was opened as usual by the squire himself at the breakfast-table. "Here is a letter for Frank," said he, "posted in the village. You had better send

it to him;" and he threw the letter across the table to Beatrice.

"It 's from Mary," said Beatrice, out loud, taking the letter up and examining the address. And having said so, she repented what she had done, as she looked first at her father and then at her mother.

A cloud came over the squire's brow as for a minute he went on turning over the letters and newspapers. "Oh, from Mary Thorne, is it?" he said. "Well, you had better send it to him."

"Frank said, that if any letters came they were to be kept," said his sister Sophy. "He told me so particularly. I don't think he likes having letters sent after him."

"You had better send that one," said the squire.

"Mr. Oriel is to have all his letters addressed to Long's Hotel, Bond Street, and this one can very well be sent with them," said Beatrice, who knew all about it, and intended herself to make a free use of the address.

"Yes; you had better send it," said the squire; and then nothing further was said at the table. But Lady Arabella, though she said nothing, had not failed to mark what had passed. Had she asked for the letter before the squire, he would probably have taken possession of it himself; but as soon as she was alone with Beatrice, she did demand it. "I shall be writing to Frank myself," she said, "and will send it to him." And so Beatrice with a heavy heart, gave it up.

The letter lay before Lady Arabella's eyes all that day, and many a wistful glance was cast at it. She turned it over and over, and much she desired to know its contents; but she did not dare to break the seal of

her son's letter. All that day it lay upon her desk, and all the next, for she could hardly bring herself to part with it; but on the Wednesday it was sent,—sent with these lines from herself;—

"Dearest, dearest Frank,—I send you a letter which has come by the post from Mary Thorne. I do not know what it may contain; but before you correspond with her, pray, pray think of what I said to you. For my sake, for your father's, for your own, pray think of it!"

That was all, but it was enough to make her word to Beatrice true. She did send it to Frank enclosed in a letter from herself. We must reserve to the next chapter what had taken place between Frank and his mother; but, for the present, we will return to the doctor's house.

Mary said not a word to him about the letter; but, keeping silent on the subject, she felt wretchedly estranged from him. "Is anything the matter, Mary?" he said to her on the Sunday afternoon.

"No, uncle," she answered, turning away her head to hide her tears.

"Ah, but there is something; what is it, dearest?"

"Nothing,—that is, nothing that one can talk about."

"What, Mary! Be unhappy and not talk about it to me? That 's something new, is it not?"

"One has presentiments sometimes, and is unhappy without knowing why. Besides, you know——"

"I know! What do I know? Do I know anything that will make my pet happier?" And he took her in

his arms as they sat together on the sofa. Her tears were now falling fast, and she no longer made an effort to hide them. "Speak to me, Mary. This is more than a presentiment. What is it?"

"Oh, uncle!"

"Come, love, speak to me; tell me why you are grieving."

"Oh, uncle; why have you not spoken to me? Why have you not told me what to do? Why have you not advised me? Why are you always so silent?"

"Silent about what?"

"You know, uncle, you know; silent about him; silent about Frank?"

Why, indeed? What was he to say to this? It was true that he had never counselled her;—never shown her what course she should take; had never even spoken to her about her lover. And it was equally true that he was not now prepared to do so, even in answer to such an appeal as this. He had a hope, a strong hope, more than a hope, that Mary's love would yet be happy; but he could not express or explain his hope; nor could he even acknowledge to himself a wish that would seem to be based on the death of him whose life he was bound, if possible, to preserve.

"My love," he said, "it is a matter in which you must judge for yourself. Did I doubt your conduct, I should interfere; but I do not."

"Conduct! Is conduct everything? One may conduct oneself excellently, and yet break one's heart."

This was too much for the doctor. His sternness and firmness instantly deserted him. "Mary," he said, "I will do anything that you will have me. If you

wish it, I will make arrangements for leaving this place at once."

"Oh, no," she said, plaintively.

"When you tell me of a broken heart, you almost break my own. Come to me, darling; do not leave me so. I will say all that I can say. I have thought, do still think, that circumstances will admit of your marriage with Frank if you both love each other, and can both be patient."

"You think so!" said she, unconsciously sliding her hand into his, as though to thank him by its pressure for the comfort he was giving her.

"I do think so now more than ever. But I only think so. I have been unable to assure you. There, darling; I must not say more; only I cannot bear to see you grieving, I would not have said this." Then he left her, and nothing more was spoken on the subject.

If you can be patient? Why, a patience of ten years would be as nothing to her. Could she but live with the knowledge that she was first in his estimation, dearest in his heart;—could it be also granted to her to feel that she was regarded as his equal, she could be patient for ever. What more did she want than to know and feel this? Patient, indeed!

But what could these circumstances be to which her uncle had alluded? "I do think that circumstances will admit of your marriage." Such was his opinion, and she had never known him to be wrong. Circumstances! What circumstances? Did he perhaps mean that Mr. Gresham's affairs were not so bad as they had been thought to be? If so, that alone would hardly alter the matter, for what could she give in return? "I would give him all the world for one word of love,"

she said to herself, "and never think that he was my debtor. Ah! how beggarly the heart must be that speculates on such gifts as those?"

But there was her uncle's opinion. He still thought that they might be married. Oh, why had she sent her letter? And why had she made it so cold? With such a letter as that before him, Frank could not do other than consent to her proposal. And then, why did he not at least answer it?

On the Sunday afternoon there arrived at Greshamsbury a man and a horse from Boxall, bearing a letter from Lady Scatcherd to Dr. Thorne, earnestly requesting the doctor's immediate attendance. "I fear everything is over with poor Louis," wrote the unhappy mother. "It has been very dreadful. Do come to me. I have no other friend, and I am nearly worn through with it. The man from the city"—she meant Dr. Fillgrave—"comes every day, and I dare say he is all very well, but he has never done much good. He has not had spirit enough to keep the bottle from him; and it was that, and that only, that most behoved to be done. I doubt you won't find him in this world when you arrive here."

Dr. Thorne started instantly. Even though he might have to meet Dr. Fillgrave, he could not hesitate, for he went not as a doctor to the dying man, but as the trustee under Sir Roger's will. Moreover, as Lady Scatcherd had said, he was her only friend, and he could not desert her at such a moment for an army of Fillgraves. He told Mary he should not return that night; and taking with him a small saddle-bag, he started at once for Boxall Hill.

As he rode up to the hall-door, Dr. Fillgrave was

getting into his carriage. They had never met so as to speak to each other since that memorable day, when they had their famous passage of arms in the hall of that very house before which they both now stood. But, at the present moment, neither of them was disposed to renew the fight.

"What news of your patient, Dr. Fillgrave?" said our doctor, still seated on his sweating horse, and putting his hand lightly to his hat.

Dr. Fillgrave could not refrain from one moment of supercilious disdain. He gave one little chuck to his head, one little twist to his neck, one little squeeze to his lips, and then the man within him overcame the doctor. "Sir Louis is no more," he said.

"God's will be done!" said Dr. Thorne.

"His death is a release;—for his last days have been very frightful. Your coming, Dr. Thorne, will be a comfort to Lady Scatcherd." And then Dr. Fillgrave, thinking that even the present circumstances required no further condescension, ensconced himself in the carriage.

"His last days have been very dreadful! Ah, me, poor fellow! Dr. Fillgrave, before you go, allow me to say this;—I am quite aware that when he fell into your hands, no medical skill in the world could save him."

Dr. Fillgrave bowed low from the carriage, and after this unwonted exchange of courtesies, the two doctors parted, not to meet again;—at any rate, in the pages of this novel. Of Dr. Fillgrave, let it now be said, that he grows in dignity as he grows in years, and that he is universally regarded as one of the celebrities of the city of Barchester.

Lady Scatcherd was found sitting alone in her little room on the ground-floor. Even Hannah was not with her, for Hannah was now occupied upstairs. When the doctor entered the room, which he did unannounced, he found her seated on a chair, with her back against one of the presses, her hands clasped together over her knees, gazing into vacancy. She did not even hear him or see him as he approached, and his hand had slightly touched her shoulder before she knew that she was not alone. Then she looked up at him with a face so full of sorrow, so worn with suffering, that his own heart was racked to see her.

"It is all over, my friend," said he. "It is better so; much better so." She seemed at first hardly to understand him, but still regarding him with that wan face, shook her head slowly and sadly. One might have thought that she was twenty years older than when Dr. Thorne last saw her. He drew a chair to her side, and sitting by her, took her hand in his. "It is better so, Lady Scatcherd; better so," he repeated. "The poor lad's doom had been spoken, and it is well for him, and for you, that it should be over."

"They are both gone now," said she, speaking very low;—"both gone now. Oh, doctor! To be left alone here, all alone!"

He said some few words, trying to comfort her; but who can comfort a widow bereaved of her child? Who can console a heart that has lost all that it possessed? Sir Roger had not been to her a tender husband; but still he had been the husband of her love. Sir Louis had not been to her an affectionate son; but still he had been her child, her only child. Now they were

both gone. Who can wonder that the world should be a blank to her?

Still the doctor spoke soothing words, and still he held her hand. He knew that his words could not console her; but the sounds of kindness at such desolate moments are, to such minds as hers, some alleviation of grief. She hardly answered him, but sat there staring out before her, leaving her hand passively to him, and swaying her head backwards and forwards as though her grief were too heavy to be borne.

At last, her eye rested on an article which stood upon the table, and she started up impetuously from her chair. She did this so suddenly, that the doctor's hand fell beside him before he knew that she had risen. The table was covered with all those implements which become so frequent about a house when severe illness is an inhabitant there. There were little boxes and apothecaries' bottles, cups and saucers standing separate, and bowls, in which messes have been prepared with the hope of suiting a sick man's failing appetite. There was a small saucepan standing on a plate, a curiously shaped glass utensil left by the doctor, and sundry pieces of flannel, which had been used in rubbing the sufferer's limbs. But in the middle of the debris stood one black bottle, with head erect, unsuited to the companionship in which it was found.

"There," said she, rising up, and seizing this in a manner that would have been ridiculous had it not been so truly tragic. "There, that has robbed me of everything,—of all that I ever possessed; of husband and child; of the father and son; that has swallowed them both,—murdered them both! Oh, doctor! that

such a thing as that should cause such bitter sorrow! I have hated it always, but now;—Oh, woe is me! weary me!" And she let the bottle drop from her hand as though it were too heavy for her.

"This comes of their barro-niting," she continued. "If they had let him alone, he would have been here now, and so would the other one. Why did they do it? Why did they do it? Ah, doctor! people such as us should never meddle with them above us. See what has come of it. See what has come of it!"

The doctor could not remain with her long, as it was necessary that he should take upon himself the direction of the household and give orders for the funeral. First of all, he had to undergo the sad duty of seeing the corpse of the deceased baronet. This, at any rate, may be spared to my readers. It was found to be necessary that the interment should be made very quickly, as the body was already nearly destroyed by alcohol. Having done all this, and sent back his horse to Greshamsbury with directions that clothes for a journey might be sent to him, and a notice that he should not be home for some days, he again returned to Lady Scatcherd.

Of course he could not but think much of the immense property which was now, for a short time, altogether in his own hands. His resolution was soon made to go at once to London and consult the best lawyer he could find,—or the best dozen lawyers should such be necessary,—as to the validity of Mary's claims. This must be done before he said a word to her or to any of the Gresham family; but it must be done instantly, so that all suspense might be at an end as soon as possible. He must, of course, remain with Lady

Scatcherd till the funeral should be over; but when that office should be complete he would start instantly for London.

In resolving to tell no one as to Mary's fortune till after he had fortified himself with legal warranty, he made one exception. He thought it rational that he should explain to Lady Scatcherd who was now the heir under her husband's will; and he was the more inclined to do so, from feeling that the news would probably be gratifying to her. With this view he had once or twice endeavoured to induce her to talk about the property, but she had been unwilling to do so. She seemed to dislike all allusions to it, and it was not till she had incidentally mentioned the fact that she would have to look for a home that he was able to fix her to the subject. This was on the evening before the funeral;—on the afternoon of which day he intended to proceed to London.

"It may probably be arranged that you may continue to live here," said the doctor.

"I don't wish it at all," said she, rather sharply. "I don't wish to have any arrangements made. I would not be indebted to any of them for anything. Oh, dear! if money could make all right, I should have enough of that."

"Indebted to whom, Lady Scatcherd? Who do you think will be the owner of Boxall Hill?"

"Indeed, then, Dr. Thorne, I don't much care. Unless it be yourself, it won't be any friend of mine, or any one I shall care to make a friend of. It is n't so easy for an old woman like me to make new friends."

"Well, it certainly won't belong to me."

"I wish it did, with all my heart. But even then I would not live here. I have had too many troubles here to wish to see more."

"That shall be just as you like, Lady Scatcherd; but you will be surprised to hear that the place will,—at least I think it will,—belong to a friend of yours; to one to whom you have been very kind."

"And who is he, doctor? Won't it go to some of those Americans? I am sure I never did anything kind to them;—though, indeed, I did love poor Mary Scatcherd. But that 's years upon years ago, and she is dead and gone now. Well; I begrudge nothing to Mary's children. As I have none of my own, it is right they should have the money. It has not made me happy. I hope it may do so to them."

"The property will, I think, go to Mary Scatcherd's eldest child. It is she whom you have known as Mary Thorne."

"Doctor!" And then Lady Scatcherd, as she made the exclamation, put both her hands down to hold her chair, as though she feared the weight of her surprise would topple her off her seat.

"Yes; Mary Thorne,—my Mary,—to whom you have been so good, who loves you so well; she, I believe, will be Sir Roger's heiress. And it was so that Sir Roger intended on his death-bed in the event of poor Louis' life being cut short. If this be so, will you be ashamed to stay here as the guest of Mary Thorne? She has not been ashamed to be your guest."

But Lady Scatcherd was now too much interested in the general tenor of the news which she had heard to care much about the house which she was to inhabit in future. Mary Thorne, the heiress of Boxall Hill.

Mary Thorne, the still living child of that poor creature who had so nearly died when they were all afflicted with their early grief! Well; there was consolation, there was comfort in this. There were but three people left in the world that she could love; her foster-child, Frank Gresham,—Mary Thorne and the doctor. If the money went to Mary, it would of course go to Frank, for she now knew that they loved each other; and if it went to them, would not the doctor have his share also;—such share as he might want? Could she have governed the matter, she would have given it all to Frank; and now it would be as well bestowed.

Yes; there was consolation in this. They both sat up more than half the night talking over it, and giving and receiving explanations. If only the council of lawyers would not be adverse! That was now the point of suspense.

The doctor, before he left her, bade her hold her peace, and say nothing of Mary's fortune to any one till her rights had been absolutely acknowledged. "It will be nothing not to have it," said the doctor; "but it would be very bad to hear that it was hers, and then to lose it."

On the next morning Dr. Thorne deposited the remains of Sir Louis in the vault prepared for the family in the parish church. He laid the son where a few months ago he had laid the father,—and so the title of Scatcherd became extinct. Their race of honour had not been long.

After the funeral the doctor hurried up to London, and there we will leave him.

CHAPTER XXI.

SATURDAY EVENING AND SUNDAY MORNING.

We must now go back a little and describe how Frank had been sent off on special business to London. The household at Greshamsbury was at this time in but a doleful state. It seemed to be pervaded, from the squire down to the scullery-maid, with a feeling that things were not going well; and men and women, in spite of Beatrice's coming marriage, were grim-visaged, and dolorous. Mr. Mortimer Gagebee, rejected though he had been, still went and came, talking much to the squire, much also to her ladyship, as to the ill-doings which were in the course of projection by Sir Louis; and Frank went about the house with clouded brow, as though finally resolved to neglect his one great duty.

Poor Beatrice was robbed of half her joy. Over and over again her brother asked her whether she had yet seen Mary, and she was obliged as often to answer that she had not. Indeed, she did not dare to visit her friend, for it was hardly possible that they should sympathise with each other. Mary was, to say the least, stubborn in her pride; and Beatrice, though she could forgive her friend for loving her brother, could not forgive the obstinacy with which Mary persisted in a course which, as Beatrice thought, she herself knew to be wrong.

And then Mr. Gagebee came down from town, with an intimation that it behoved the squire himself to go up that he might see certain learned pundits, and be badgered in his own person at various dingy, dismal chambers in Lincoln's Inn Fields, the Temple, and Gray's Inn Lane. It was an invitation exactly of that sort which a good many years ago was given to a certain duck.

"Will you, will you—will you, will you—come and be killed?" Although Mr. Gagebee urged the matter with such eloquence, the squire remained steady to his objection, and swam obstinately about his Greshamsbury pond in any direction save that which seemed to lead towards London.

This occurred on the very evening of that Friday which had witnessed Lady Arabella's last visit to Dr. Thorne's house. The question of the squire's necessary journey to the great fountains of justice was, of course, discussed between Lady Arabella and Mr. Gagebee; and it occurred to the former, full as she was of Frank's iniquity and of Mary's obstinacy, that if Frank were sent up in lieu of his father, it would separate them at least for a while. If she could only get Frank away without seeing his love she might yet so work upon him, by means of the message which Mary had sent, as to postpone, if not break off, this hateful match. It was inconceivable that a youth of twenty-three, and such a youth as Frank, should be obstinately constant to a girl possessed of no great beauty, —so argued Lady Arabella to herself,—and who had neither wealth, birth, nor fashion to recommend her.

And thus it was at last settled,—the squire being a willing party to the agreement,—that Frank should go

up and be badgered in lieu of his father. At his age it was possible to make it appear a thing desirable, if not necessary,—on account of the importance conveyed,—to sit day after day in the chambers of Messrs. Slow and Bideawhile, and hear musty law talk, and finger dusty law parchments. The squire had made many visits to Messrs. Slow and Bideawhile, and he knew better. Frank had not hitherto been there on his own bottom, and thus he fell easily into the trap.

Mr. Oriel was also going to London, and this was another reason for sending Frank. Mr. Oriel had business of great importance which it was quite necessary that he should execute before his marriage. How much of this business consisted in going to his tailor, buying a wedding-ring, and purchasing some other more costly present for Beatrice, we need not here inquire. But Mr. Oriel was quite on Lady Arabella's side with reference to this mad engagement, and as Frank and he were now fast friends, some good might be done in that way. "If we all caution him against it, he can hardly withstand us all," said Lady Arabella to herself.

The matter was broached to Frank on the Saturday evening, and settled between them all the same night. Nothing, of course, was at that moment said about Mary; but Lady Arabella was too full of the subject to let him go to London without telling him that Mary was ready to recede if he only would allow her to do so. About eleven o'clock, Frank was sitting in his own room, conning over the difficulties of his situation, —thinking of his father's troubles, and his own position,—when he was roused from his reverie by a slight tap at the door.

"Come in," said he, somewhat loudly. He thought it was one of his sisters, who were apt to visit him at all hours and for all manner of reasons; and he, though he was usually gentle to them, was not at present exactly in a humour to be disturbed.

The door gently opened, and he saw his mother standing hesitating in the passage. "Can I come in, Frank?" said she.

"Oh, yes, mother; by all means:" and then, with some surprise marked in his countenance, he prepared a seat for her. Such a visit as this from Lady Arabella was very unusual. So much so, that he had probably not seen her in his own room since the day when he first left school. He had nothing, however, to be ashamed of; nothing to conceal, unless it were an open letter from Miss Dunstable which he had in his hand when she entered, and which he somewhat hurriedly thrust into his pocket.

"I wanted to say a few words to you, Frank, before you start for London about this business." Frank signified by a gesture, that he was quite ready to listen to her.

"I am so glad to see your father putting the matter into your hands. You are younger than he is; and then,—I don't know why, but somehow your father has never been a good man of business;—everything has gone wrong with him."

"Oh, mother! do not say anything against him."

"No, Frank, I will not; I do not wish it. Things have been unfortunate, certainly. Ah, me! I little thought when I married;—but I don't mean to complain; I have excellent children, and I ought to be thankful for that."

Frank began to fear that no good could be coming when his mother spoke in that strain. "I will do the best I can," said he, "up in town. I can't help thinking myself that Mr. Gagebee might have done as well, but——"

"Oh, dear, no; by no means. In such cases the principal must show himself. Besides, it is right you should know how matters stand. Who is so much interested in it as you are? Poor Frank! I so often feel for you when I think how the property has dwindled."

"Pray do not mind me, mother. Why should you talk of it as my matter while my father is not yet forty-five? His life, so to speak, is as good as mine. I can do very well without it. All I want is to be allowed to settle to something."

"You mean a profession."

"Yes; something of that sort."

"They are so slow, dear Frank. You, who speak French so well,—I should think my brother might get you in as an attaché to some embassy."

"That would n't suit me at all," said Frank.

"Well; we 'll talk about that another time. But I came about something else, and I do hope you will hear me." Frank's brow again grew black, for he knew that his mother was about to say something which it would be disagreeable for him to hear. "I was with Mary yesterday."

"Well, mother?"

"Don't be angry with me, Frank. You can't but know that the fate of an only son must be a subject of anxiety to a mother." Ah! how singularly altered was Lady Arabella's tone since first she had taken

upon herself to discuss the marriage prospects of her son! Then how autocratic had she been as she sent him away, bidding him, with full command, to throw himself into the golden embraces of Miss Dunstable! But now, how humble, as she came suppliantly to his room, craving that she might have leave to whisper into his ears a mother's anxious fears! Frank had laughed at her stern behests though he had half obeyed them; but he was touched to the heart by her humility.

He drew his chair nearer to her, and took her by the hand. But she, disengaging hers, parted the hair from off his forehead, and kissed his brow. "Oh, Frank," she said, "I have been so proud of you, am still so proud of you. It will send me to my grave if I see you sink below your proper position. Not that it will be your fault. I am sure it will not be your fault. Only, circumstanced as you are, you should be doubly, trebly careful. If your father had not——"

"Do not speak against my father."

"No, Frank; I will not;—no, I will not; not another word. And now, Frank——"

Before we go on we must say one word further as to Lady Arabella's character. It will probably be said that she was a consummate hypocrite; but at the present moment she was not hypocritical. She did love her son; was anxious,—very, very anxious for him; was proud of him, and almost admired the very obstinacy which so vexed her to her inmost soul. No grief would be to her so great as that of seeing him sink below what she conceived to be his position. She was as genuinely motherly, in wishing that he should marry money, as another woman might be in wishing to see her son a bishop; or as the Spartan matron who pre-

ferred that her offspring should return on his shield to hearing that he had come back whole in limb but tainted in honour. When Frank spoke of a profession, she instantly thought of what Lord De Courcy might do for him. If he would not marry money, he might, at any rate, be an attaché at an embassy. A profession—hard work, as a doctor, or as an engineer,—would, according to her ideas, degrade him; cause him to sink below his proper position; but to dangle at a foreign court, to make small talk at the evening parties of a lady ambassadress, and occasionally, perhaps, to write demi-official notes containing demi-official tittle-tattle. This would be in proper accordance with the high honour of a Gresham of Greshamsbury. We may not admire the direction taken by Lady Arabella's energy on behalf of her son, but that energy was not hypocritical.

"And now, Frank——" She looked wistfully into his face as she addressed him, as though half afraid to go on, and begging that he would receive with complaisance whatever she found herself forced to say.

"Well, mother?"

"I was with Mary yesterday."

"Yes, yes; what then? I know what your feelings are with regard to her."

"No, Frank; you wrong me. I have no feelings against her;—none indeed; none but this: that she is not fit to be your wife."

"I think her fit."

"Ah, yes; but how fit? Think of your position, Frank, and what means you have of keeping her. Think what you are. Your father's only son; the heir to Greshamsbury. If Greshamsbury be ever again

more than a name, it is you that must redeem it. Of all men living you are the least able to marry a girl like Mary Thorne."

"Mother, I will not sell myself for what you call my position."

"Who asks you? I do not ask you; nobody asks you. I do not want you to marry any one. I did think once, but let that pass. You are now twenty-three. In ten years' time you will still be a young man. I only ask you to wait. If you marry now; that is, marry such a girl as Mary Thorne——"

"Such a girl! Where shall I find such another?"

"I mean as regards money, Frank;—you know I mean that; how are you to live? Where are you to go? And then, her birth. Oh, Frank! Frank!"

"Birth! I hate such pretence. What was;—but I won't talk about it. Mother, I tell you my word is pledged, and on no account will I be induced to break it."

"Ah, that 's just it; that 's just the point! Now, Frank, listen to me. Pray listen to me patiently for one minute. I do not ask much of you." Frank promised that he would listen patiently; but he looked anything but patient as he said so. "I have seen Mary, as it was certainly my duty to do. You cannot be angry with me for that."

"Who said that I was angry, mother?"

"Well, I have seen her, and I must own, that though she was not disposed to be courteous to me, personally, she said much that marked her good sense. But the gist of it was this; that as she had made you a promise, nothing should turn her from that promise but your permission."

"And do you think——"

"Wait a moment, Frank, and listen to me. She confessed that this marriage was one which would necessarily bring distress on all your family; that it was one which would probably be ruinous to yourself; that it was a match which could not be approved of. She did, indeed; she confessed all that. 'I have nothing,' she said—those were her own words—'I have nothing to say in favour of this engagement, except that he wishes it.' That is what she thinks of it herself. 'His wishes are not a reason; but a law,' she said——"

"And, mother, would you have me desert such a girl as that?"

"It is not deserting, Frank. It would not be deserting. You would be doing that which she herself approves of. She feels the impropriety of going on; but she cannot draw back because of her promise to you. She thinks that she cannot do it, even though she wishes it."

"Wishes it! Oh, mother!"

"I do believe she does, because she has sense to feel the truth of all that your friends say. Oh, Frank, I will go on my knees to you if you will listen to me."

"Oh, mother! mother! mother!"

"You should think twice, Frank, before you refuse the only request your mother ever made you. And why do I ask you? Why do I come to you thus? Is it for my own sake? Oh, my boy! my darling boy! will you lose everything in life, because you love the child with whom you have played as a child?"

"Whose fault is it that we were together as children? She is now more than a child. I look on her already as my wife."

"But she is not your wife, Frank; and she knows that she ought not to be. It is only because you hold her to it that she consents to be so."

"Do you mean to say that she does not love me?"

Lady Arabella would probably have said this, also, had she dared; but she felt, that in so doing, she would be going too far. It was useless for her to say anything that would be utterly contradicted by an appeal to Mary herself. "No, Frank; I do not mean to say that she does not love you. What I do mean is this: that it is not becoming in you to give up everything,—not only yourself, but all your family,—for such a love as this; and that she, Mary herself, acknowledges this. Every one is of the same opinion. Ask your father. I need not say that he would agree with you about everything if he could. I will not say ask the De Courcys."

"Oh, the De Courcys?"

"Yes; they are my relations; I know that." Lady Arabella could not quite drop the tone of bitterness which was natural to her in saying this. "But ask your sisters; ask Mr. Oriel, whom you esteem so much; ask your friend Harry Baker."

Frank sat silent for a moment or two while his mother, with a look almost of agony, gazed into his face. "I will ask no one," at last he said.

"Oh, my boy! my boy!"

"No one but myself can know my own heart."

"And you will sacrifice all to such a love as that, all;—her, also, whom you say that you so love? What happiness can you give her as your wife? Oh, Frank! is that the only answer you will make your mother on her knees?"

"Oh, mother! mother!"

"No, Frank, I will not let you ruin yourself; I will not let you destroy yourself. Promise this, at least, that you will think of what I have said."

"Think of it! I do think of it."

"Ah! but think of it in earnest. You will be absent now in London; you will have the business of the estate to manage; you will have heavy cares upon your hands. Think of it as a man, and not as a boy."

"I will see her to-morrow before I go."

"No, Frank, no; grant me that trifle. Think upon this without seeing her. Do not proclaim yourself so weak that you cannot trust yourself to think over what your mother says to you without asking her leave. Though you be in love, do not be childish with it. What I have told you as coming from her is true, word for word. If it were not, you would soon learn so. Think now of what I have said, and of what she says, and when you come back from London, then you can decide."

To so much Frank consented after some further parley;—namely, that he would proceed to London on the following Monday morning without again seeing Mary. In the mean time, she was waiting with sore heart for his answer to that letter which was lying, and was still to lie for so many hours, in the safe protection of the Silverbridge postmistress!

It may seem strange; but, in truth, his mother's eloquence had more effect on Frank than that of his father; and yet, with his father he had always sympathised. But his mother had been energetic; whereas, his father, if not lukewarm, had, at any rate, been timid. "I will ask no one," Frank had said in the

strong determination of his heart; and yet the words were hardly out of his mouth before he bethought himself that he would talk the thing over with Harry Baker. "Not," said he to himself, "that I have any doubt; I have no doubt; but I hate to have all the world against me. My mother wishes me to ask Harry Baker. Harry is a good fellow, and I will ask him." And with this resolve he betook himself to bed.

The following day was Sunday. After breakfast Frank went with the family to church, as was usual; and there, as usual, he saw Mary in Dr. Thorne's pew. She, as she looked at him, could not but wonder why he had not answered the letter which was still at Silverbridge; and he endeavoured to read in her face whether it was true, as his mother had told him, that she was quite ready to give him up. The prayers of both of them were disturbed, as is so often the case with the prayers of other anxious people.

There was a separate door opening from the Greshamsbury pew out into the Greshamsbury grounds, so that the family were not forced into unseemly community with the village multitude in going to and from their prayers;—for the front door of the church led out into a road which had no connection with the private path. It was not unusual with Frank and his father to go round, after the service, to the chief entrance, so that they might speak to their neighbours, and get rid of some of the exclusiveness which was intended for them. On this morning the squire did so; but Frank walked home with his mother and sisters, so that Mary saw no more of him.

I have said that he walked home with his mother and his sisters; but he rather followed in their path. He

was not inclined to talk much, at least, not to them; and he continued asking himself the question,—whether it could be possible that he was wrong in remaining true to his promise? Could it be that he owed more to his father and his mother, and what they chose to call his position, than he did to Mary?

After church Mr. Gagebee tried to get hold of him, for there was much still to be said, and many hints given, as to how Frank should speak, and, more especially, as to how he should hold his tongue among the learned pundits in and about Chancery Lane. "You must be very wide-awake with Messrs. Slow and Bideawhile," said Mr. Gagebee. But Frank would not hearken to him just at that moment. He was going to ride over to Harry Baker, so he put Mr. Gagebee off till the half-hour before dinner,—or else the half-hour after tea.

On the previous day he had received a letter from Miss Dunstable which he had hitherto read but once. His mother had interrupted him as he was about to refer to it; and now, as his father's nag was being saddled,—he was still prudent in saving the black horse,—he again took it out.

Miss Dunstable had written in an excellent humour. She was in great distress about the Oil of Lebanon, she said. "I have been trying to get a purchaser for the last two years; but my lawyer won't let me sell it because the would-be purchasers offer a thousand pounds or so less than the value. I would give ten to be rid of the bore; but I am as little able to act myself as Sancho was in his government. The Oil of Lebanon! Did you hear anything of it when you were in those parts? I thought of changing the name to

'London particular;' but my lawyer says the brewers would bring an action against me.

"I was going down to your neighbourhood,—to your friend the duke's, at least. But I am prevented by my poor doctor, who is so weak that I must take him to Malvern. It is a great bore; but I have the satisfaction that I do my duty by him!

"Your cousin George is to be married at last. So I hear, at least. He loves wisely, if not well; for his widow has the name of being prudent and fairly well to do in the world. She has also got over the caprices of her youth. Dear aunt De Courcy will be so delighted. I might perhaps have met her at Gatherum Castle. I do so regret it.

"Mr. Moffat has turned up again. We all thought you had finally extinguished him. He left a card the other day, and I have told the servant always to say that I am at home and that you are with me. He is going to stand for some borough in the west of Ireland. He 's used to shillalahs by this time.

"By-the-bye, I have a cadeau for a friend of yours. I won't tell you what it is, nor permit you to communicate the fact. But when you tell me that in sending it I may fairly congratulate her on having so devoted a slave as you, it shall be sent.

"If you have nothing better to do at present, do come and see my invalid at Malvern. Perhaps you might have a mind to treat for the Oil of Lebanon. I 'll give you all the assistance I can in cheating my lawyers. . . ."

There was not much about Mary in this; but still, the little that was said made him again declare that neither father nor mother should move him from his

resolution. "I will write to her and say that she may send her present when she pleases. Or I will run down to Malvern for a day. It will do me good to see her." And so resolved he rode away to Mill Hill, thinking, as he went, how he would put the matter to Harry Baker.

Harry was at home; but we need not describe the whole interview. Had Frank been asked beforehand, he would have declared, that on no possible subject could he have had the slightest hesitation in asking Harry any question, or communicating to him any tidings. But when the time came he found that he did hesitate much. He did not want to ask his friend if he should be wise to marry Mary Thorne. Wise or not, he was determined to do that. But he wished to be quite sure that his mother was wrong in saying that all the world would dissuade him from it. Miss Dunstable, at any rate, did not do so.

At last, seated on a stile at the back of the Mill Hill stables, while Harry stood close before him with both his hands in his pockets, he did get his story told. It was by no means the first time that Harry Baker had heard about Mary Thorne, and he was not, therefore, so surprised as he might have been, had the affair been new to him. And thus, standing there in the position we have described, did Mr. Baker junior give utterance to such wisdom as was in him on this subject.

"You see, Frank, there are two sides to every question; and as I take it, fellows are so apt to go wrong because they are so fond of one side, they won't look at the other. There 's no doubt about it, Lady Arabella is a very clever woman, and knows what 's what;

and there 's no doubt about this either, that you have a very ticklish hand of cards to play."

"I 'll play it straightforward;—that 's my game," said Frank.

"Well and good, my dear fellow. That 's the best game always. But what is straightforward? Between you and me, I fear there 's no doubt that your father's property has got into a deuce of a mess."

"I don't see that that has anything to do with it."

"Yes, but it has. If the estate was all right, and your father could give you a thousand a year to live on without feeling it, and if your eldest child would be cock sure of Greshamsbury, it might be very well that you should please yourself as to marrying at once. But that 's not the case; and yet Greshamsbury is too good a card to be flung away."

"I could fling it away to-morrow," said Frank.

"Ah, you think so," said Harry the Wise. "But if you were to hear to-morrow that Sir Louis Scatcherd were master of the whole place, and be d—— to him, you would feel very uncomfortable." Had Harry known how near Sir Louis was to his last struggle, he would not have spoken of him in this manner. "That 's all very fine talk, but it won't bear wear and tear. You do care for Greshamsbury if you are the fellow I take you to be; care for it very much; and you care, too, for your father being Gresham of Greshamsbury."

"This won't affect my father at all."

"Ah, but it will affect him very much! If you were to marry Miss Thorne to-morrow, there would at once be an end to any hope of your saving the property."

"And do you mean to say I 'm to be a liar to her for such reasons as that? Why, Harry, I should be as bad as Moffat. Only it would be ten times more cowardly, as she has no brother."

"I must differ from you there altogether; but mind, I don't mean to say anything. Tell me that you have made up your mind to marry her, and I 'll stick to you through thick and thin. But if you ask my advice, why, I must give it. It is quite a different affair to that of Moffat's. He had lots of tin, everything he could want, and there could be no reason why he should not marry,—except that he was a snob, of whom your sister was well quit. But this is very different. If I, as your friend, were to put it to Miss Thorne, what do you think she would say herself?"

"She would say whatever she thought best for me."

"Exactly; because she is a trump. And I say the same. There can be no doubt about it, Frank, my boy. Such a marriage would be very foolish for you both; very foolish. Nobody can admire Miss Thorne more than I do; but you ought n't to be a marrying man for the next ten years, unless you get a fortune. If you tell her the truth, and if she 's the girl I take her to be, she 'll not accuse you of being false. She 'll peak for a while; and so will you, old chap. But others have had to do that before you. They have got over it, and so will you."

Such was the spoken wisdom of Harry Baker, and who can say that he was wrong? Frank sat awhile on his rustic seat, paring his nails with his penknife, and then looking up, he thus thanked his friend; "I 'm sure you mean well, Harry; and I 'm much obliged to you. I dare say you 're right too. But, somehow, it

does n't come home to me. And what is more, after what has passed, I could not tell her that I wish to part from her. I could not do it. And besides, I have that sort of feeling, that if I heard she was to marry any one else, I am sure I should blow his brains out; either his or my own."

"Well, Frank, you may count on me for anything, except the last proposition:" and so they shook hands, and Frank rode back to Greshamsbury.

CHAPTER XXII.

LAW BUSINESS IN LONDON.

On the Monday morning at six o'clock, Mr. Oriel and Frank started together; but early as it was, Beatrice was up to give them a cup of coffee, Mr. Oriel having slept that night in the house. Whether Frank would have received his coffee from his sister's fair hands had not Mr. Oriel been there, may be doubted. He, however, loudly asserted that he should not have done so when she laid claim to great merit for rising in his behalf.

Mr. Oriel had been specially instigated by Lady Arabella to use the opportunity of their joint journey, for pointing out to Frank the iniquity as well as madness of the course he was pursuing; and he had promised to obey her ladyship's behests. But Mr. Oriel was perhaps not an enterprising man, and was certainly not a presumptuous one. He did intend to do as he was bid; but when he began, with the object of leading up to the subject of Frank's engagement, he always softened down into some much easier enthusiasm in the matter of his own engagement with Beatrice. He had not that perspicuous, but not oversensitive strength of mind which had enabled Harry Baker to express his opinion out at once; and, boldly as he did it, yet to do so without offence.

Four times before the train arrived in London, he made some little attempt; but four times he failed. As the subject was matrimony, it was his easiest course to begin about himself; but he never could get any farther. "No man was ever more fortunate in a wife than I shall be," he said, with a soft, euphuistic self-complacency, which would have been silly had it been adopted to any other person than the bride's brother. His intention, however, was very good, for he meant to show, that in his case marriage was prudent and wise, because his case differed so widely from that of Frank.

"Yes," said Frank. "She is an excellent good girl." He had said it three times before, and was not very energetic.

"Yes, and so exactly suited to me; indeed, all that I could have dreamed of. How very well she looked this morning! Some girls only look well at night. I should not like that at all."

"You must n't expect her to look like that always at six o'clock A.M." said Frank, laughing. "Young ladies only take that trouble on very particular occasions. She would n't have come down like that if my father or I had been going alone. No, and she won't do so for you in a couple of years' time."

"Oh, but she 's always nice. I have seen her at home as much almost as you could do;—and then she 's so sincerely religious."

"Oh, yes, of course; that is, I am sure she is," said Frank, looking solemn as became him.

"She 's made to be a clergyman's wife."

"Well, so it seems," said Frank.

"A married life is, I 'm sure, the happiest in the

world,—if people are only in a position to marry," said Mr. Oriel, gradually drawing near to the accomplishment of his design.

"Yes; quite so. Do you know, Oriel, I never was so sleepy in my life. What with all that fuss of Gagebee's, and one thing and another, I could not get to bed till one o'clock; and then I could n't sleep. I 'll take a snooze now if you won't think it uncivil." And then, putting his feet upon the opposite seat, he settled himself comfortably to his rest. And so Mr. Oriel's last attempt for lecturing Frank in the railway carriage faded away and was annihilated.

By twelve o'clock Frank was with Messrs. Slow and Bideawhile. Mr. Bideawhile was engaged at the moment, but he found the managing chancery clerk to be a very chatty gentleman. Judging from what he saw, he would have said that the work to be done at Messrs. Slow and Bideawhile's was not very heavy. "A singular man that Sir Louis," said the chancery clerk.

"Yes; very singular," said Frank.

"Excellent security, excellent; no better: and yet he will foreclose; but you see he has no power himself. But the question is, can the trustee refuse? Then, again, trustees are so circumstanced now-a-days that they are afraid to do anything. There has been so much said lately, Mr. Gresham, that a man does n't know where he is, or what he is doing. Nobody trusts anybody. There have been such terrible things that we can't wonder at it. Only think of the case of those Hills! How can any one expect that any one else will ever trust a lawyer again after that? But that 's Mr. Bideawhile's bell. How can any one

expect it? He will see you now, I dare say, Mr. Gresham."

So it turned out, and Frank was ushered into the presence of Mr. Bideawhile. He had got his lesson by heart, and was going to rush into the middle of his subject. Such a course, however, was not in accordance with Mr. Bideawhile's usual practice. Mr. Bideawhile got up from his large wooden-seated Windsor chair, and, with a soft smile, in which, however, was mingled some slight dash of the attorney's acuteness, put out his hand to his young client;—not, indeed, as though he were going to shake hands with him, but as though the hand were some ripe fruit all but falling, which his visitor might take and pluck if he thought proper. Frank took hold of the hand, which returned him no pressure, and then let it go again, not making any attempt to gather the fruit.

"I have come up to town, Mr. Bideawhile, about this mortgage," commenced Frank.

"Mortgage;—ah, sit down, Mr. Gresham; sit down. I hope your father is quite well."

"Quite well, thank you."

"I have a great regard for your father. So I had for your grandfather; a very good man indeed. You, perhaps, don't remember him, Mr. Gresham?"

"He died when I was only a year old."

"Oh, yes; no, you of course can't remember him; but I do, well. He used to be very fond of some port wine I had. I think it was '11;' and if I don't mistake, I have a bottle or two of it yet; but it is not worth drinking now. Port wine, you know, won't keep beyond a certain time. That was very good wine. I don't exactly remember what it stood me a dozen

then; but such wine can't be had now. As for the Madeira, you know, there 's an end of that. Do you drink Madeira, Mr. Gresham?"

"No," said Frank, "not very often."

"I 'm sorry for that, for it 's a fine wine; but then there 's none of it left, you know. I have a few dozen. I 'm told they 're growing pumpkins where the vineyards were. I wonder what they do with all the pumpkins they grow in Switzerland. You 've been in Switzerland, Mr. Gresham?" Frank said he had been in Switzerland. "It 's a beautiful country; my girls made me go there last year. They said it would do me good; but then, you know, they wanted to see it themselves; ha! ha! ha! However, I believe I shall go again this autumn. That is, to Aix, or some of those places; just for three weeks. I can't spare any more time, Mr. Gresham. Do you like that dining at the tables d'hôte?"

"Pretty well, sometimes."

"One would get tired of it,—eh? But they gave us capital dinners at Zurich. I don't think much of their soup. But they had fish, and about seven kinds of meats and poultry, and three or four puddings and things of that sort. Upon my word, I thought we did very well, and so did my girls too. You see a great many ladies travelling now."

"Yes," said Frank, "a great many."

"Upon my word, I think they are right;—that is, if they can afford time. I can't afford time. I 'm here every day till five, Mr. Gresham; then I go out and dine in Fleet Street, and then back to work till nine."

"Dear me! that 's very hard."

"Well, yes; it is hard work. My boys don't like it; but I manage it somehow. I get down to my little place in the country on Saturday. I shall be most happy to see you there next Saturday."

Frank, thinking it would be outrageous on his part to take up much of the time of a gentleman who was constrained to work so unreasonably hard, began again to talk about his mortgages, and, in so doing, had to mention the name of Mr. Yates Umbleby.

"Ah, poor Umbleby!" said Mr. Bideawhile; "what is he doing now? I am quite sure your father was right, or he would n't have done it; but I used to think that Umbleby was a decent sort of man enough. Not so grand, you know, as your Gagebees and Gumptions,—eh, Mr. Gresham? They do say young Gagebee is thinking of getting into Parliament. Let me see. Umbleby married,—who was it he married? That was the way your father got hold of him; not your father, but your grandfather. I used to know all about it. Well, I was sorry for Umbleby. He has got something, I suppose—eh?"

Frank said that he believed Mr. Yates Umbleby had something wherewith to keep the wolf from the door.

"So you have got Gagebee down there now? Gumption, Gagebee, and Gagebee: very good people, I 'm sure;—only, perhaps, they have a little too much on hand to do your father justice."

"But about Sir Louis, Mr. Bideawhile?"

"Well, about Sir Louis; a very bad sort of fellow, is n't he? Drinks,—eh? I knew his father a little. He was a rough diamond, too. I was once down in Northamptonshire, about some railway business; let me see; I almost forget whether I was with him, or

against him. But I know he made sixty thousand pounds by one hour's work! And then he got so mad with drinking that we all thought——"

And so Mr. Bideawhile went on for two hours, and Frank found no opportunity of saying one word about the business which had brought him up to town. What wonder that such a man as this should be obliged to stay at his office every night till nine o'clock?

During these two hours, a clerk had come in three or four times, whispering something to the lawyer, who, on the last of such occasions, turned to Frank, saying, "Well, perhaps that will do for to-day. If you 'll manage to call to-morrow, say about two, I will have the whole thing looked up; or, perhaps, Wednesday or Thursday would suit you better." Frank, declaring that the morrow would suit him very well, took his departure, wondering much at the manner in which business was done at the house of Messrs. Slow and Bideawhile.

When he called the next day, the office seemed to be rather disturbed, and he was shown quickly into Mr. Bideawhile's room. "Have you heard this?" said that gentleman, putting a telegram into his hands. It contained tidings of the death of Sir Louis Scatcherd. Frank immediately knew that these tidings must be of importance to his father; but he had no idea how vitally they concerned his own more immediate interests.

"Dr. Thorne will be up in town on Thursday evening after the funeral," said the talkative clerk. "And nothing of course can be done till he comes," said Mr. Bideawhile. And so Frank, pondering on the mutability of human affairs, again took his departure.

He could do nothing now but wait for Dr. Thorne's arrival, and so he amused himself in the interval by running down to Malvern, and treating with Miss Dunstable in person for the Oil of Lebanon. He went down on the Wednesday, and thus failed to receive, on the Thursday morning, Mary's letter, which reached London on that day. He returned, however, on the Friday, and got it; and perhaps it was well for Mary's happiness that he had seen Miss Dunstable in the interval. "I don't care what your mother says," said she, with emphasis. "I don't care for any Harry, whether it be Harry Baker, or old Harry himself. You made her a promise, and you are bound to keep it; if not on one day, then on another. What! because you cannot draw back yourself, get out of it by inducing her to do so! Aunt De Courcy herself could not improve upon that." Fortified in this manner, he returned to town on the Friday morning, and then got Mary's letter. Frank also got a note from Dr. Thorne, stating that he had taken up his temporary domicile at the Gray's Inn Coffee-house, so as to be near the lawyers.

It has been suggested that the modern English writers of fiction should among them keep a barrister, in order that they may be set right on such legal points as will arise in their little narratives, and thus avoid that exposure of their own ignorance of the laws, which now, alas! they too often make. The idea is worthy of consideration, and I can only say, that if such an arrangement can be made, and if a counsellor adequately skilful can be found to accept the office, I shall be happy to subscribe my quota. It would be but a modest tribute towards the cost. But as the sugges-

tion has not yet been carried out, and as there is at present no learned gentleman whose duty would induce him to set me right, I can only plead for mercy if I be wrong in allotting all Sir Roger's vast possessions in perpetuity to Miss Thorne, alleging also, in excuse, that the course of my narrative absolutely demands that she shall be ultimately recognised as Sir Roger's undoubted heiress. Such, after a not immoderate delay, was the opinion expressed to Dr. Thorne by his law advisers; and such, in fact, turned out to be the case. I will leave the matter so, hoping that my very absence of defence may serve to protect me from severe attack. If under such a will as that described as having been made by Sir Roger Mary would not have been the heiress, that will must have been described wrongly.

But it was not quite at once that those tidings made themselves absolutely certain to Dr. Thorne's mind; nor was he able to express any such opinion when he first met Frank in London. At that time Mary's letter was in Frank's pocket; and Frank, though his real business appertained much more to the fact of Sir Louis' death, and the effect that would immediately have on his father's affairs, was much more full of what so much more nearly concerned himself. "I will show it to Dr. Thorne himself," said he, "and ask him what he thinks."

Dr. Thorne was stretched fast asleep on the comfortless horse-hair sofa in the dingy sitting-room at the Gray's Inn Coffee-house when Frank found him. The funeral, and his journey to London, and the lawyers had together conquered his energies, and he lay and

snored, with nose upright, while heavy London summer flies settled on his head and face, and robbed his slumbers of half their charms. "I beg your pardon," said he, jumping up as though he had been detected in some disgraceful act. "Upon my word, Frank, I beg your pardon; but,—well, my dear fellow, all well at Greshamsbury,—eh?" As he shook himself, he made a lunge at one uncommonly disagreeable fly that had been at him for the last ten minutes. It is hardly necessary to say that he missed his enemy.

"I should have been with you before, doctor, but I was down at Malvern."

"At Malvern, eh? Ah, so Oriel told me! The death of poor Sir Louis was very sudden,—was it not?"

"Very."

"Poor fellow,—poor fellow! His fate has for some time been past hope. It is a madness, Frank; the worst of madness. Only think of it,—father and son! And such a career as the father had! such a career as the son might have had!"

"It has been very quickly run," said Frank.

"May it be all forgiven him! I sometimes cannot but believe in a special Providence. That poor fellow was not able, never would have been able, to make proper use of the means which fortune had given him. I hope they may fall into better hands. There is no use in denying it, his death will be an immense relief to me, and a relief also to your father. All this law business will now, of course, be stopped. As for me, I hope I may never be a trustee again."

Frank had put his hand four or five times into his breast-pocket, and had as often taken out and put back

again Mary's letter before he could find himself able to bring Dr. Thorne to the subject. At last there was a lull in the purely legal discussion, caused by the doctor intimating that he supposed Frank would now soon return to Greshamsbury. "Yes; I shall go to-morrow morning."

"What! so soon as that? I counted on having you one day in London with me."

"No, I shall go to-morrow. I 'm not fit company for any one. Nor am I fit for anything. Read that, doctor. It 's no use putting it off any longer. I must get you to talk this over with me. Just read that, and tell me what you think about it. It was written a week ago, when I was there, but somehow I have only got it to-day." And putting the letter into the doctor's hands, he turned away to the window, and looked out among the Holborn omnibuses. Dr. Thorne took the letter and read it. Mary, after she had written it, had bewailed to herself that the letter was cold; but it had not seemed cold to her lover, nor did it appear so to her uncle. When Frank again turned round from the window, the doctor's handkerchief was up to his eyes; who, in order to hide the tears that were there, was obliged to go through a rather violent process of blowing his nose.

"Well," he said, as he gave back the letter to Frank. Well! what did well mean? Was it well? or would it be well, were he, Frank, to comply with the suggestion made to him by Mary?

"It is impossible," he said, "that matters should go on like that. Think what her sufferings must have been before she wrote that. I am sure she loves me."

"I think she does," said the doctor.

"And it is out of the question that she should be sacrificed; nor will I consent to sacrifice my own happiness. I am quite willing to work for my bread, and I am sure that I am able. I will not submit to—— Doctor, what answer do you think I ought to give to that letter? There can be no person so anxious for her happiness as you are,—except myself." And, as he asked the question, he again put into the doctor's hand, almost unconsciously, the letter which he had still been holding in his own. The doctor turned it over and over, and then opened it again. "What answer ought I to make to it?" demanded Frank, with energy.

"You see, Frank, I have never interfered in this matter, otherwise than to tell you the whole truth about Mary's birth."

"Oh, but you must interfere! You should say what you think."

"Circumstanced as you are now,—that is, just at the present moment,—you could hardly marry immediately."

"Why not let me take a farm? My father could, at any rate, manage a couple of thousand pounds or so for me to stock it. That would not be asking much. If he could not give it me, I would not scruple to borrow so much elsewhere." And Frank bethought him of all Miss Dunstable's offers.

"Oh, yes; that could be managed."

"Then why not marry immediately;—say in six months or so? I am not unreasonable; though, heaven knows, I have been kept in suspense long enough. As for her, I am sure she must be suffering frightfully. You know her best, and, therefore, I ask

you what answer I ought to make. As for myself, I have made up my own mind; I am not a child, nor will I let them treat me as such."

Frank, as he spoke, was walking rapidly about the room; and he brought out his different propositions, one after the other, with a little pause, while waiting for the doctor's answer. The doctor was sitting, with the letter still in his hands, on the head of the sofa, turning over in his mind the apparent absurdity of Frank's desire to borrow two thousand pounds for a farm, when in all human probability, he might in a few months be in possession of almost any sum he should choose to name. And yet he would not tell him of Sir Roger's will. "If it should turn out to be all wrong?" said he to himself.

"Do you wish me to give her up?" said Frank, at last.

"No. How can I wish it? How can I expect a better match for her? Besides, Frank, I love no man in the world so well as I do you."

"Then you will help me?"

"What! against your father?"

"Against! no, not against anybody. But will you tell Mary that she has your consent?"

"I think she knows that."

"But you have never said anything to her."

"Look here, Frank; you ask me for my advice, and I will give it you. Go home; though, indeed, I would rather you went anywhere else."

"No, I must go home; and I must see her."

"Very well, go home: as for seeing Mary, I think you had better put it off for a fortnight."

"Quite impossible."

"Well, that 's my advice. But, at any rate, make up your mind to nothing for a fortnight. Wait for one fortnight, and I then will tell you plainly,—you and her too,—what I think you ought to do. At the end of a fortnight come to me, and tell the squire that I will take it as a great kindness if he will come with you. She has suffered, terribly, terribly; and it is necessary that something should be settled. But a fortnight more can make no great difference."

"And the letter?"

"Oh! there 's the letter."

"But what shall I say? Of course I shall write to-night."

"Tell her to wait a fortnight. And, Frank, mind you bring your father with you."

Frank could draw nothing further from his friend save constant repetitions of this charge to him to wait a fortnight,—just one other fortnight. "Well, I will come to you at any rate," said Frank; "and, if possible, I will bring my father. But I shall write to Mary to-night."

On the Saturday morning, Mary, who was then nearly broken-hearted at her lover's silence, received this short note;—

"My own Mary,—I shall be home to-morrow. I will by no means release you from your promise. Of course you will perceive that I only got your letter to-day. Your own, dearest,

"Frank.

"P.S.—You will have to call me so hundreds and hundreds of times yet."

Short as it was, this sufficed to Mary. It is one thing for a young lady to make prudent, heart-breaking suggestions, but quite another to have them accepted. She did call him dearest Frank, even on that one day, almost as often as he had desired her.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OUR PET FOX FINDS A TAIL.

FRANK returned home, and his immediate business was of course with his father, and with Mr. Gagebee, who was still at Greshamsbury.

"But who is the heir?" asked Mr. Gagebee, when Frank had explained that the death of Sir Louis rendered unnecessary any immediate legal steps.

"Upon my word I don't know," said Frank.

"You saw Dr. Thorne," said the squire. "He must have known."

"I never thought of asking him," said Frank, naïvely.

Mr. Gagebee looked rather solemn. "I wonder at that," said he; "for everything now depends on the hands the property will go into. Let me see; I think Sir Roger had a married sister. Was not that so, Mr. Gresham?" And then it occurred for the first time, both to the squire and to his son, that Mary Thorne was the eldest child of this sister. But it never occurred to either of them that Mary could be the baronet's heir.

Dr. Thorne came down for a couple of days before the fortnight was over to see his patients, and then returned again to London. But during this short visit he was utterly dumb on the subject of the heir. He called at Greshamsbury to see Lady Arabella, and was

even questioned by the squire on the subject. But he obstinately refused to say more than that nothing certain could be known for yet a few days.

Immediately after his return Frank saw Mary, and told her all that happened. "I cannot understand my uncle," said she, almost trembling as she stood close to him in her own drawing-room. "He usually hates mysteries, and yet now he is so mysterious. He told me, Frank,—that was after I had written that unfortunate letter——"

"Unfortunate, indeed! I wonder what you really thought of me when you were writing it?"

"If you had heard what your mother said, you would not be surprised. But, after all, uncle said——"

"Said what?"

"He seemed to think;—I don't remember what it was he said. But he said, he hoped that things might yet turn out well; and then I was almost sorry that I had written the letter."

"Of course you were sorry, and so you ought to have been. To say that you would never call me Frank again!"

"I did n't exactly say that."

"I have told him I will wait a fortnight, and so I will. After that, I shall take the matter into my own hands." It may be well supposed that Lady Arabella was not well pleased to learn that Frank and Mary had been again together; and, in the agony of her spirit, she did say some ill-natured things before Augusta, who had now returned from Courcy Castle, as to the gross impropriety of Mary's conduct. But to Frank she said nothing.

Nor was there much said between Frank and Bea-

trice. If everything could really be settled at the end of that fortnight which was to witness the disclosure of the doctor's mystery, there would still be time to arrange that Mary should be at the wedding. "It shall be settled then," said he to himself; "and if it be settled, my mother will hardly venture to exclude my affianced bride from the house." It was now the beginning of August, and it wanted yet a month to the Oriel wedding.

But though he said nothing to his mother or to Beatrice, he did say much to his father. In the first place, he showed him Mary's letter. "If your heart be not made of iron it will be softened by that," he said. Mr. Gresham's heart was not of stone, and he did acknowledge that the letter was a very sweet letter. But we know how the drop of water hollows the stone. It was not by the violence of his appeal that Frank succeeded in obtaining from his father a sort of half-consent that he would no longer oppose the match; but by the assiduity with which the appeal was repeated. Frank, as we have said, had more stubbornness of will than his father; and so, before the fortnight was over, the squire had been talked over, and had promised to attend at the doctor's bidding.

"I suppose you had better take the Hazelhurst farm," said he to his son, with a sigh. "It joins the park and the home-fields, and I will give you up them also. God knows, I don't care about farming any more,—or about anything else either."

"Don't say that, father."

"Well, well! But, Frank, where will you live? The old house is big enough for us all. But how would Mary get on with your mother?"

At the end of his fortnight, true to his time, the doctor returned to the village. He was a bad correspondent; and though he had written some short notes to Mary, he had said no word to her about his business. It was late in the evening when he got home, and it was understood by Frank and the squire that they were to be with him on the following morning. Not a word had been said to Lady Arabella on the subject.

It was late in the evening when he got home, and Mary waited for him with a heart almost sick with expectation. As soon as the fly had stopped at the little gate she heard his voice, and heard at once that it was quick, joyful, and telling much of inward satisfaction. He had a good-natured word for Janet, and called Thomas an old blunderhead in a manner that made Bridget laugh outright. "He 'll have his nose put out of joint some day; won't he?" said the doctor. Bridget blushed and laughed again, and made a sign to Thomas that he had better look to his face.

Mary was in his arms before he was yet within the door. "My darling," said he, tenderly kissing her. "You are my own darling yet awhile."

"Of course I am. Am I not always to be so?"

"Well, well; let me have some tea, at any rate, for I 'm in a fever of thirst. They may call that tea at the Junction if they will; but if China were sunk under the sea it would make no difference to them." Dr. Thorne always was in a fever of thirst when he got home from the railway, and always made complaint as to the tea at the Junction. Mary went about her usual work with almost more than her usual alacrity, and so they were soon seated in the drawing-room together.

She soon found that his manner was more than ordinarily kind to her; and there was moreover something about him which seemed to make him sparkle with contentment, but he said no word about Frank, nor did he make any allusion to the business which had taken him up to town. "Have you got through all your work?" she said to him once.

"Yes, yes; I think all."

"And thoroughly?"

"Yes; thoroughly, I think. But I am very tired, and so are you too, darling, with waiting for me."

"Oh, no, I am not," said she, as she went on continually filling his cup; "but I am so happy to have you home again. You have been away so much lately."

"Ah, yes; well, I suppose I shall not go away any more now. It will be somebody else's turn now.

"Uncle, I think you 're going to take to writing mysterious romances, like Mrs. Radcliffe's."

"Yes; and I 'll begin to-morrow, certainly, with—— But, Mary, I will not say another word to-night. Give me a kiss, dearest, and I 'll go."

Mary did kiss him, and he did go. But as she was still lingering in the room, now putting away a book, or a reel of thread, and then sitting down to think what the morrow would bring forth, the doctor again came into the room in his dressing-gown, and with his slippers on. "What, not gone yet?" said he.

"No, not yet; I 'm going now."

"You and I, Mary, have always affected a good deal of indifference as to money, and all that sort of thing."

"I won't acknowledge that it has been affectation at all," she answered.

"Perhaps not; but we have often expressed it, have we not?"

"I suppose, uncle, you think that we are like the fox that lost his tail, or rather some unfortunate fox that might be born without one."

"I wonder how we should either of us bear it if we found ourselves suddenly rich? It would be a great temptation,—a sore temptation. I fear, Mary, that when poor people talk disdainfully of money, they often are like your fox born without a tail. If nature suddenly should give that beast a tail, would he not be prouder of it than all the other foxes in the wood?"

"Well, I suppose he would. That 's the very meaning of the story. But how moral you 've become all of a sudden at twelve o'clock at night! Instead of being Mrs. Radcliffe, I shall think you 're Mr. Æsop."

He took up the article which he had come to seek, and kissing her again on the forehead, went away to his bedroom without further speech. "What can he mean by all this about money?" said Mary to herself. "It cannot be that by Sir Louis' death he will get any of all this property;" and then she began to bethink herself whether, after all, she would wish him to be a rich man. If he were rich he might do something to assist Frank; and then——

There never was a fox yet without a tail who would not be delighted to find himself suddenly possessed of that appendage. Never; let the untailed fox have been ever so sincere in his advice to his friends! We are all of us, the good and the bad, looking for tails,—for one tail, or for more than one. We do so too often by ways that are mean enough; but perhaps there is no tail-seeker more mean, more sneakingly mean, than

he who looks out to adorn his bare back with a tail by marriage.

The doctor was up very early the next morning, long before Mary was ready with her teacups. He was up and in his own study behind the shop arranging dingy papers, pulling about tin boxes which he had brought down with him from London, and piling on his writing table one set of documents in one place, and one in another. "I think I understand it all," said he; "but yet I know I shall be bothered. Well, I never will be anybody's trustee again. Let me see!" and then he sat down, and with bewildered look recapitulated to himself sundry heavy items. "What those shares are really worth I cannot understand, and nobody seems able to tell one. They must make it out among them as best they can. Let me see;—that 's Boxall Hill, and this is Greshamsbury. I 'll put a newspaper over Greshamsbury, or the squire will know it!" Then, having made his arrangements, he went to his breakfast.

I know I am wrong, my much and truly-honoured critic, about these title-deeds and documents. But when we 've got that barrister in hand, then if I go wrong after that, let the blame be on my own shoulders, —or on his.

The doctor ate his breakfast quickly, and did not talk much to his niece. But what he did say was of a nature to make her feel strangely happy. She could not analyse her own feelings, or give a reason for her own confidence; but she certainly did feel, and even trust, that something was going to happen after breakfast which would make her more happy than she had been for many months. "Janet," said he, looking at his watch, "if Mr. Gresham and Mr. Frank call, show

them into my study. What are you going to do with yourself, my dear?"

"I don't know, uncle. You are so mysterious, and I am in such a twitter, that I don't know what to do. Why is Mr. Gresham coming here; that is, the squire?"

"Because I have business with him about the Scatcherd property. You know that he owed Sir Louis money. But don't go out, Mary. I want you to be in the way if I should have to call for you. You can stay in the drawing-room, can't you?"

"Oh, yes, uncle; or here."

"No, dearest; go into the drawing-room." Mary obediently did as she was bid; and there she sat, for the next three hours, wondering, wondering, wondering. During the greater part of that time, however, she well knew that Mr. Gresham, senior, and Mr. Gresham, junior, were both with her uncle, below.

At eleven o'clock the doctor's visitors came. He had expected them somewhat earlier, and was beginning to become fidgety. He had so much on his hands that he could not sit still for a moment till he had, at any rate, commenced it. The expected footsteps were at last heard on the gravel-path, and a moment or two afterwards Janet ushered the father and son into the room.

The squire did not look very well. He was worn and sorrowful, and rather pale. The death of his young creditor might be supposed to have given him some relief from his more pressing cares, but the necessity of yielding to Frank's wishes had almost more than balanced this. When a man has daily to reflect that he is poorer than he was the day before, he soon becomes worn and sorrowful.

But Frank was well; both in health and spirits.

He also felt as Mary did that the day was to bring forth something which should end his present troubles; and he could not but be happy to think that he could now tell Dr. Thorne that his father's consent to his marriage had been given.

The doctor shook hands with them both, and then they sat down. They were all rather constrained in their manner; and at first it seemed that nothing but little speeches of compliment were to be made. At last, the squire remarked that Frank had been talking to him about Miss Thorne.

"About Mary?" said the doctor.

"Yes; about Mary," said the squire, correcting himself. It was quite unnecessary that he should use so cold a name as the other, now that he had agreed to the match.

"Well!" said Dr. Thorne.

"I suppose it must be so, doctor. He has set his heart upon it, and, God knows, I have nothing to say against her,—against her personally. No one could say a word against her. She is a sweet, good girl, excellently brought up; and, as for myself, I have always loved her." Frank drew near to his father, and pressed his hand against the squire's arm, by way of giving him, in some sort, a filial embrace for his kindness.

"Thank you, squire, thank you," said the doctor. "It is very good of you to say that. She is a good girl, and if Frank chooses to take her, he will, in my estimation, have made a good choice."

"Chooses!" said Frank, with all the enthusiasm of a lover.

The squire felt himself perhaps a little ruffled at the way in which the doctor received his gracious intima-

tion; but he did not show it as he went on. "They cannot, you know, doctor, look to be rich people."

"Ah! well, well!" interrupted the doctor.

"I have told Frank so, and I think that you should tell Mary. Frank means to take some land into his hand, and he must farm it as a farmer. I will endeavour to give him three, or perhaps four hundred a year. But you know better than——"

"Stop, squire; stop a minute. We will talk about that presently. This death of poor Sir Louis will make a difference."

"Not permanently," said the squire, mournfully.

"And now, Frank," said the doctor, not attending to the squire's last words, "what do you say?"

"What do I say? I say what I said to you in London the other day. I believe Mary loves me; indeed, I won't be affected;—I know she does. I have loved her,—I was going to say always; and, indeed, I almost might say so. My father knows that this is no light fancy of mine. As to what he says about our being poor, why——"

The doctor was very arbitrary, and would hear neither of them on this subject. "Mr. Gresham," said he, interrupting Frank, "of course I am well aware how very little suited Mary is by birth to marry your only son."

"It is too late to think about it now," said the squire.

"It is not too late for me to justify myself," replied the doctor. "We have long known each other, Mr. Gresham, and you said here the other day, that this is a subject as to which we have been both of one mind. Birth and blood are very valuable gifts."

"I certainly think so," said the squire; "but one can't have everything."

"No; one can't have everything."

"If I am satisfied in that matter——" Began Frank.

"Stop a moment, my dear boy," said the doctor. "As your father says, one can't have everything. My dear friend,"—and he gave his hand to the squire,—"do not be angry if I allude for a moment to the estate. It has grieved me to see it melting away,—the old family acres that have so long been the heritage of the Greshams."

"We need not talk about that now, Dr. Thorne," said Frank, in almost an angry tone.

"But I must, Frank, for one moment, to justify myself. I could not have excused myself in letting Mary think that she could become your wife if I had not hoped that good might come of it."

"Well; good will come of it," said Frank, who did not quite understand at what the doctor was driving.

"I hope so. I have had much doubt about this, and have been sorely perplexed; but now I do hope so. Frank;—Mr. Gresham." Then Dr. Thorne rose from his chair; but was, for a moment, unable to go on with his tale.

"We will hope that it is all for the best," said the squire.

"I am sure it is," said Frank.

"Yes; I hope it is. I do think it is; I am sure it is, Frank. Mary will not come to you empty-handed. I wish for your sake,—yes, and for hers too,—that her birth were equal to her fortune, as her worth is superior to both. Mr. Gresham, this marriage will, at any

rate, put an end to your pecuniary embarrassments;—unless, indeed, Frank should prove a hard creditor. My niece is Sir Roger Scatcherd's heir."

The doctor, as soon as he made the announcement, began to employ himself sedulously about the papers on the table; which, in the confusion caused by his own emotion, he transferred hither and thither in such a manner as to upset all his previous arrangements. "And now," he said, "I might as well explain, as well as I can, of what that fortune consists. Here, this is;—no——"

"But, Dr. Thorne," said the squire, now perfectly pale, and almost gasping for breath, "what is it you mean?"

"There 's not a shadow of doubt," said the doctor. "I 've had Sir Abraham Haphazard, and Sir Rickety Giggs, and old Neversaye Die, and Mr. Smilam; and they are all of the same opinion. There is not the smallest doubt about it. Of course, she must administer, and all that, and I 'm afraid there 'll be a very heavy sum to pay for the tax;—for she cannot inherit as a niece, you know. Mr. Smilam pointed that out particularly. But, after all that, there 'll be,—I 've got it down on a piece of paper, somewhere;—three grains of blue pill. I 'm really so bothered, squire, with all these papers, and all those lawyers, that I don't know whether I 'm sitting or standing. There 's ready money enough to pay all the tax and all the debts. I know that, at any rate."

"You don't mean to say that Mary Thorne is now possessed of all Sir Roger Scatcherd's wealth?" at last ejaculated the squire.

"But that 's exactly what I do mean to say," said

the doctor, looking up from his papers with a tear in his eye, and a smile on his mouth; "and what is more, squire, you owe her at the present moment exactly; —I 've got that down too, somewhere, only I am so bothered with these papers. Come, squire, when do you mean to pay her? She 's in a great hurry, as young ladies are when they want to get married."

The doctor was inclined to joke if possible, so as to carry off, as it were, some of the great weight of obligation which it might seem that he was throwing on the father and son; but the squire was by no means in a state to understand a joke,—hardly as yet in a state to comprehend what was so very serious in this matter.

"Do you mean that Mary is the owner of Boxall Hill?" said he.

"Indeed, I do," said the doctor; and he was just going to add, "and of Greshamsbury also," but he stopped himself.

"What, the whole property there?"

"That 's only a small portion," said the doctor. "I almost wish it were all, for then I should not be so bothered. Look here; these are the Boxall Hill title-deeds; that 's the simplest part of the whole affair; and Frank may go and settle himself there to-morrow if he pleases."

"Stop a moment, Dr. Thorne," said Frank. These were the only words which he had yet uttered since the tidings had been conveyed to him.

"And these, squire, are the Greshamsbury papers;" and the doctor, with considerable ceremony, withdrew the covering newspaper. "Look at them;—there they all are once again. When I suggested to Mr. Smilam that I supposed they might now all go back to the

Greshamsbury muniment-room, I thought he would have fainted. As I cannot return them to you, you will have to wait till Frank shall give them up."

"But, Dr. Thorne," said Frank.

"Well, my boy."

"Does Mary know all about this?"

"Not a word of it. I mean that you shall tell her."

"Perhaps, under such very altered circumstances——"

"Eh?"

"The change is so great and so sudden, so immense in its effects, that Mary may perhaps wish——"

"Wish! wish what? Wish not to be told of it at all?"

"I shall not think of holding her to her engagement, —that is, if—— I mean to say, she should have time at any rate for consideration."

"Oh, I understand!" said the doctor. "She shall have time for consideration. How much shall we give her, squire? Three minutes? Go up to her, Frank; she is in the drawing-room."

Frank went to the door, and then hesitated, and returned. "I could not do it," said he. "I don't think that I understand it all yet. I am so bewildered that I could not tell her." And he sat down at the table, and began to sob with emotion.

"And she knows nothing of it?" asked the squire.

"Not a word. I thought that I would keep the pleasure of telling her for Frank."

"She should not be left in suspense," said the squire.

"Come, Frank, go up to her," again urged the doctor. "You 've been ready enough with your visits when you knew that you ought to stay away."

"I cannot do it," said Frank, after a pause of some moments;—"nor is it right that I should. It would be taking advantage of her."

"Go to her yourself, doctor; it is you that should do it," said the squire.

After some further slight delay, the doctor got up, and did go upstairs. He, even, was half afraid of the task. "It must be done," he said to himself, as his heavy steps mounted the stairs. "But how to tell it!"

When he entered, Mary was standing halfway up the room, as though she had risen to meet him. Her face was troubled, and her eyes were almost wild. The emotion, the hopes, the fears of that morning had almost been too much for her. She had heard the murmuring of voices in the room below, and had known that one was that of her lover. Whether that discussion was to be for her good or ill she did not know; but she felt that further suspense would almost kill her. "I could wait for years," she thought to herself, "if I did but know. If I lost him, I suppose I should bear it, if I did but know."—Well; she was going to know.

Her uncle met her in the middle of the room. His face was serious, though not sad; too serious to confirm her hopes at that moment of doubt. "What is it, uncle?" she said, taking one of his hands between both of her own. "What is it? Tell me." And as she looked up into his face with her wild eyes, she almost frightened him.

"Mary," he said, gravely, "you have heard much, I know, of Sir Roger Scatcherd's great fortune."

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Now that poor Sir Louis is dead——"

"Well, uncle, well?"

"It has been left——"

"To Frank! to Mr. Gresham! to the squire!" exclaimed Mary.

"No, Mary, not to the Greshams;—but to yourself."

"To me!" she cried, and putting both her hands to her forehead, she seemed to be holding her temples together. "To me!"

"Yes, Mary; it is all your own now. To do as you like best with it all. May God, in His mercy, enable you to bear the burden, and lighten for you the temptation!"

She had so far moved as to find the nearest chair, and there she was now seated, staring at her uncle with fixed eyes. "Uncle," she said, "what does it mean?" Then he came, and sitting beside her, explained, as best he could, the story of her birth, and her kinship with the Scatcherds. "And where is he, uncle?" she said. "Why does he not come to me?"

"I wanted him to come, but he refused. They are both there now, the father and son. Shall I fetch them?"

"Fetch them! whom? The squire? No, uncle; but may we go to them?"

"Surely, Mary."

"But, uncle——"

"Yes, dearest."

"Is it true? Are you sure? For his sake, you know; not for my own. The squire, you know—— Oh, uncle! I cannot go."

"They shall come to you."

"No,—no. I have gone to him such hundreds of

times. I will never allow that he shall be sent to me. But, uncle, is it true?"

The doctor, as [illegible] some-thing about Sh[illegible] Rickety Giggs; but [illegible] and the [illegible] mm [illegible] tiled steps. She was at first afraid [illegible] when she [illegible] look up, and saw Frank standing [illegible] her love restored her courage, and [illegible] to him, she threw herself into his arms.

Oh, Frank; my own Frank! my own Frank! we shall never be separated.

"We shall never be separated now."

times. I will never allow that he shall be sent to me. But, uncle, is it true?"

The doctor, as he went downstairs, muttered something about Sir Abraham Haphazard, and Sir Rickety Giggs; but these great names were much thrown away upon poor Mary. The doctor entered the room first, and the heiress followed him with downcast eyes and timid steps. She was at first afraid to advance, but when she did look up, and saw Frank standing alone by the window, her love restored her courage, and rushing up to him, she threw herself into his arms. "Oh, Frank; my own Frank! my own Frank! we shall never be separated now."

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW THE BRIDE WAS RECEIVED, AND WHO WERE ASKED TO THE WEDDING.

And thus after all did Frank perform his great duty; he did marry money; or rather, as the wedding has not yet taken place, and is, indeed, as yet hardly talked of, we should more properly say that he had engaged himself to marry money. And then, such a quantity of money! The Scatcherd wealth exceeded the Dunstable wealth; so that our hero may be looked on as having performed his duties in a manner deserving the very highest commendation from all classes of the De Courcy connection.

And he received it. But that was nothing. That he should be fêted by the De Courcys and Greshams, now that he was about to do his duty by his family in so exemplary a manner; that he should be patted on the back, now that he no longer meditated that vile crime which had been so abhorrent to his mother's soul;—this was only natural; this is hardly worthy of remark. But there was another to be fêted, another person to be made a personage, another blessed human mortal about to do her duty by the family of Gresham in a manner that deserved and should receive Lady Arabella's warmest caresses.

Dear Mary! It was, indeed, not singular that she

should be prepared to act so well, seeing that in early youth she had had the advantage of an education in the Greshamsbury nursery; but not on that account was it the less fitting that her virtue should be acknowledged, eulogised, nay, all but worshipped.

How the party at the doctor's got itself broken up, I am not prepared to say. Frank, I know, stayed and dined there, and his poor mother, who would not retire to rest till she had kissed him, and blessed him, and thanked him for all that he was doing for the family, was kept waiting in her dressing-room till a very unreasonable hour of the night.

It was the squire who brought the news up to the house. "Arabella," he said, in a low but somewhat solemn voice, "you will be surprised at the news I bring you. Mary Thorne is the heiress to all the Scatcherd property!"

"Oh, heavens! Mr. Gresham."

"Yes, indeed," continued the squire. "So it is; it is very, very——" But Lady Arabella had fainted. She was a woman who generally had her feelings and her emotions much under her own control; but what she now heard was too much for her. When she came to her senses, the first words that escaped her lips were, "Dear Mary!"

But the household had to sleep on the news before it could be fully realised. The squire was not by nature a mercenary man. If I have at all succeeded in putting his character before the reader, he will be recognised as one not over attached to money for money's sake. But things had gone so hard with him, the world had become so rough, so ungracious, so full of thorns, the want of means had become an

evil so keenly felt in every hour, that it cannot be wondered at that his dreams that night should be of a golden elysium. The wealth was not coming to him. True. But his chief sorrow had been for his son. Now that son would be his only creditor. It was as though mountains of marble had been taken off from his bosom.

But Lady Arabella's dreams flew away at once into the seventh heaven. Sordid as they certainly were, they were not absolutely selfish. Frank would now certainly be the first commoner in Barsetshire. Of course he would represent the county; of course there would be the house in town; it would n't be her house, but she was contented that the grandeur should be that of her child. He would have heaven knows what to spend per annum. And that it should come through Mary Thorne! What a blessing that she had allowed Mary to be brought into the Greshamsbury nursery! Dear Mary!

"She will of course be one now," said Beatrice to her sister. With her, at the present moment, "one" of course meant one of the bevy that was to attend her at the altar. "Oh, dear! how nice! I shan't know what to say to her to-morrow. But I know one thing."

"What is that?" asked Augusta.

"She will be as mild and as meek as a little dove. If she and the doctor had lost every shilling in the world she would have been as proud as an eagle." It must be acknowledged that Beatrice had had the wit to read Mary's character aright.

But Augusta was not quite pleased with the whole affair. Not that she begrudged her brother his luck,

or Mary her happiness. But her ideas of right and wrong,—perhaps we should rather say Lady Amelia's ideas,—would not be fairly carried out.

"After all, Beatrice, this does not alter her birth. I know it is useless saying anything to Frank."

"Why, you would n't break both their hearts now?"

"I don't want to break their hearts, certainly. But there are those who put their dearest and warmest feelings under restraint rather than deviate from what they know to be proper." Poor Augusta! she was the stern professor of the order of this philosophy; the last in the family who practised with unflinching courage its cruel behests;—the last, always excepting the Lady Amelia.

And how slept Frank that night? With him, at least, let us hope, nay, let us say boldly, that his happiest thoughts were not of the wealth which he was to acquire. But yet it would be something to restore Boxall Hill to Greshamsbury; something to give back to his father those rumpled vellum documents, since the departure of which the squire had never had a happy day; nay, something to come forth again to his friends as a gay, young country squire, instead of as a farmer, clod-compelling for his bread. We would not have him thought to be better than he was, nor would we wish to make him of other stuff than nature generally uses. His heart did exult at Mary's wealth;—but it leaped higher still when he thought of purer joys.

And what shall we say of Mary's dreams? With her, it was altogether what she should give, not at all what she should get. Frank had loved her so truly when she was so poor, such an utter castaway! Frank, who had ever been the heir of Greshamsbury! Frank,

who with his beauty, and spirit, and his talents might have won the smiles of the richest, the grandest, the noblest! What lady's heart would not have rejoiced to be allowed to love her Frank? But he had been true to her through everything. Ah! how often she thought of that hour, when suddenly appearing before her, he had strained her to his breast, just as she had resolved how best to bear the death-like chill of his supposed estrangements! She was always thinking of that time. She fed her love by recurring over and over to the altered feeling of that moment. And now she could pay him for his goodness. Pay him! No, that would be a base word, a base thought. Her payment must be made, if God would so grant it, in many, many years to come. But her store, such as it was, should be emptied into his lap. It was soothing to her pride that she would not hurt him by her love, that she would bring no injury to the old house. "Dear, dear Frank," she murmured, as her waking dreams, conquered at last by sleep, gave way to those of the fairy world.

But she thought not only of Frank;—dreamed not only of him. What had he not done for her, that uncle of hers, who had been more loving to her than any father! How was he, too, to be paid? Paid indeed! Love can only be paid in its own coin. It knows of no other legal tender. Well, if her home was to be Greshamsbury, at any rate she would not be separated from him.

What the doctor dreamed of that night, neither he nor any one ever knew. "Why, uncle, I think you 've been asleep," said Mary to him that evening, as he moved for a moment uneasily on the sofa. He had

been asleep for the last three-quarters of an hour. But Frank, his guest, had felt no offence. "No, I 've not been exactly asleep," said he; "but I 'm very tired. I would n't do it all again, Frank, to double the money. You have n't got any more tea, have you, Mary?"

On the following morning, Beatrice was of course with her friend. There was no awkwardness between them in meeting. Beatrice had loved her when she was poor, and though they had not lately thought alike on one very important subject, Mary was too gracious to impute that to Beatrice as a crime. "You will be one now, Mary; of course you will."

"If Lady Arabella will let me come."

"Oh, Mary; let you! Do you remember what you once said about coming and being near me? I have so often thought of it. And now, Mary, I must tell you about Caleb;" and the young lady settled herself on the sofa, so as to have a comfortable, long talk. Beatrice had been quite right. Mary was as meek with her and as mild as a dove.

And then Patience Oriel came. "My fine, young, darling, magnificent, overgrown heiress," said Patience, embracing her. "My breath deserted me, and I was nearly stunned when I heard of it. How small we shall all be, my dear! I am quite prepared to toady you immensely;—but pray be a little gracious to me, for the sake of auld lang syne."

Mary gave her a long, long kiss. "Yes, for auld lang syne, Patience; when you took me away under your wing to Richmond." Patience also had loved her when she was in her trouble, and that love, too, should never be forgotten.

But the great difficulty was Lady Arabella's first

meeting with her. "I think I 'll go down to her after breakfast," said her ladyship to Beatrice, as the two were talking over the matter while the mother was finishing her toilet.

"I am sure she will come up if you like it, mamma."

"She is entitled to every courtesy,—as Frank's accepted bride, you know," said Lady Arabella. "I would not for worlds fail in any respect to her for his sake."

"He will be glad enough for her to come, I am sure," said Beatrice.

"I was walking with Caleb this morning, and he says——"

The matter was of importance, and Lady Arabella gave it her most mature consideration. The manner of receiving into one's family an heiress whose wealth is to cure all one's difficulties, disperse all one's troubles, give a balm to all the wounds of misfortune, must, under any circumstances, be worthy of much care. But, how much more so, when that heiress has been already treated as Mary had been treated!

"I must see her, at any rate, before I go to Courcy," said Lady Arabella.

"Are you going to Courcy, mamma?"

"Oh, certainly; yes, I must see my sister-in-law now. You don't seem to realise the importance, my dear, of Frank's marriage. He will be in a great hurry about it, and, indeed, I cannot blame him. I expect that they will all come here."

"Who, mamma? The De Courcys?"

"Yes, of course. I shall be very much surprised if the earl does not come now. And I must consult my sister as to asking the Duke of Omnium." Poor

Mary! "And I think it will perhaps be better," continued Lady Arabella, "that we should have a larger party than we intended at your affair. The countess, I 'm sure, would come now. We could n't put it off for ten days; could we, dear?"

"Put it off for ten days!"

"Yes; it would be convenient."

"I don't think Mr. Oriel would like that at all, mamma. You know he has made all his arrangements for his Sundays."

Pshaw! The idea of the parson's Sundays being allowed to have any bearing on such matter as Frank's wedding would now become! Why, they would have; —how much? Between twelve and fourteen thousand a year! Lady Arabella, who had made her calculations a dozen times during the night, had never found it to be much less than the larger sum. Mr. Oriel's Sundays, indeed.

After much doubt, Lady Arabella acceded to her daughter's suggestion, that Mary should be received at Greshamsbury instead of being called on at the doctor's house. "If you think she won't mind the coming up first," said her ladyship, "I certainly could receive her better here. I should be more,—more,—more able, you know, to express what I feel. We had better go into the big drawing-room to-day, Beatrice. Will you remember to tell Mrs. Richards?"

"Oh, certainly," was Mary's answer, when Beatrice, with a voice a little trembling, proposed to her to walk up to the house. "Certainly, I will, if Lady Arabella will receive me;—only one thing, Trichy."

"What 's that, dearest?"

"Frank will think that I come up after him."

"Never mind what he thinks. To tell you the truth, Mary, I often call upon Patience for the sake of finding Caleb. That 's all fair now, you know."

Mary very quietly put on her straw bonnet and said she was ready to go up to the house. Beatrice was a little fluttered, and showed it. Mary was, perhaps, a good deal fluttered, but she did not show it. She had thought a good deal of her first interview with Lady Arabella, of her first return to the house; but she had resolved to carry herself as though the matter were easy to her. She would not allow it to be seen that she felt that she brought with her to Greshamsbury, comfort, ease, and renewed opulence.

So she put on her straw bonnet and walked up with Beatrice. Everybody about the place had already heard the news. The old woman at the lodge curtsied low to her, and the gardener who was mowing the lawn. The butler, who opened the front door,—he must have been watching Mary's approach,—had manifestly put on a clean white neckcloth for the occasion.

"God bless you once more, Miss Thorne!" said the old man in a half-whisper. Mary was somewhat troubled, for everything seemed, in a manner, to bow down before her. And why should not everything bow down before her, seeing that she was in very truth the owner of Greshamsbury?

And then a servant in livery would open the big drawing-room door. This rather upset both Mary and Beatrice. It became almost impossible for Mary to enter the room just as she would have done two years ago; but she got through the difficulty with much self-control. "Mamma, here 's Mary," said Beatrice.

Nor was Lady Arabella quite mistress of herself, although she had studied minutely how to bear herself. "Oh, Mary, my dear Mary; what can I say to you?" And then, with a handkerchief to her eyes, she ran forward and hid her face on Miss Thorne's shoulders. "What can I say;—can you forgive me my anxiety for my son?"

"How do you do, Lady Arabella?" said Mary.

"My daughter! my child! my Frank's own bride! Oh, Mary! oh, my child! If I have seemed unkind to you, it has been through love to him."

"All these things are over now," said Mary. "Mr. Gresham told me yesterday that I should be received as Frank's future wife; and so, you see, I have come." And then she slipped through Lady Arabella's arms and sat down, meekly, on a chair. In five minutes she had escaped with Beatrice into the schoolroom, and was kissing the children, and turning over the new trousseau. They were, however, soon interrupted, and there was, perhaps, some other kissing besides that of the children.

"You have no business in here at all, Frank," said Beatrice. "Has he, Mary?"

"None in the world, I should think."

"See what he has done to my poplin. I hope you won't have your things treated so cruelly. He 'll be careful enough about them."

"Is Oriel a good hand at packing up finery,—eh, Beatrice?" asked Frank.

"He is, at any rate, too well-behaved to spoil it." Thus Mary was again made at home in the household of Greshamsbury.

Lady Arabella did not carry out her little plan of

delaying the Oriel wedding. Her idea had been to add some grandeur to it, in order to make it a more fitting precursor of that other greater wedding which was to follow so soon in its wake. But this, with the assistance of the countess, she found herself able to do without interfering with poor Mr. Oriel's Sunday arrangements. The countess herself, with the Ladies Alexandrina and Margaretta, now promised to come, even to this first affair; and for the other, the whole De Courcy family would turn out, count and countess, lords and ladies, honourable Georges and honourable Johns. What honour, indeed, could be too great to show to a bride who had fourteen thousand a year in her own right, or to a cousin who had done his duty by marrying so much money!

"If the duke be in the country, I am sure he will be happy to come," said the countess. "Of course, he will be talking to Frank about politics. I suppose the squire won't expect Frank to belong to the old school now?"

"Frank, of course, will judge for himself, Rosina; —with his position, you know!" And so things were settled at Courcy Castle.

And then Beatrice was wedded and carried off to the lakes. Mary, as she had promised, did stand near her; but not exactly in the gingham frock of which she had once spoken. She wore on that occasion—— But it will be too much, perhaps, to tell the reader what she wore as Beatrice's bridesmaid, seeing that a couple of pages, at least, must be devoted to her own marriage-dress, and seeing, also, that we have only a few pages to finish everything;—the list of visitors, the marriage settlements, the dress, and all included.

It was in vain that Mary endeavoured to repress Lady Arabella's ardour for grand doings. After all, she was to be married from the doctor's house, and not from Greshamsbury, and it was the doctor who should have invited the guests; but, in this matter, he did not choose to oppose her ladyship's spirit, and she had it all her own way.

"What can I do?" said he to Mary. "I have been contradicting her in everything for the last two years. The least we can do is to let her have her own way now in a trifle like this."

But there was one point on which Mary would let nobody have his or her own way;—on which the way to be taken was very manifestly to be her own. This was touching the marriage settlements. It must not be supposed, that if Beatrice were married on a Tuesday, Mary could be married on the Tuesday week following. Ladies with twelve thousand a year cannot be disposed of in that way. And bridegrooms who do their duty by marrying money often have to be kept waiting. It was spring, the early spring, before Frank was made altogether a happy man.

But a word about the settlements. On this subject the doctor thought he would have been driven mad. Messrs. Slow and Bideawhile, as the lawyers of the Greshamsbury family,—it will be understood that Mr. Gagebee's law business was quite of a different nature, and his work, as regarded Greshamsbury, was now nearly over,—Messrs. Slow and Bideawhile declared that it would never do for them to undertake alone to draw out the settlements. An heiress such as Mary must have lawyers of her own; half-a-dozen at least, according to the apparent opinion of Messrs. Slow and

Bideawhile. And so the doctor had to go to other lawyers, and they had again to consult Sir Abraham and Mr. Smilam on a dozen different heads.

If Frank became tenant in tail, in right of his wife, but under his father, would he be able to grant leases for more than twenty-one years? and, if so, to whom would the right of trover belong? As to flotsam and jetsam,—there was a little property, Mr. Critic, on the sea-shore—that was a matter that had to be left unsettled at the last. Such points as these do take a long time to consider. All this bewildered the doctor sadly, and Frank himself began to make accusations that he was to be done out of his wife altogether.

But, as we have said, there was one point on which Mary would have her own way. The lawyers might tie up as they would on her behalf all the money, and shares, and mortgages which had belonged to the late Sir Roger, with this exception;—all that had ever appertained to Greshamsbury should belong to Greshamsbury again; not in perspective, not to her children, or to her children's children, but at once. Frank should be lord of Boxall Hill in his own right; and as to those other liens on Greshamsbury, let Frank manage that with his father as he might think fit. She would only trouble herself to see that he was empowered to do as he should think fit.

"But," argued the ancient, respectable family-attorney to the doctor, "that amounts to two-thirds of the whole estate. Two thirds, Dr. Thorne! It is preposterous. I should almost say impossible." And the scanty hairs on the poor man's head almost stood on end as he thought of the outrageous manner in which the heiress prepared to sacrifice herself.

"It will be all the same in the end," said the doctor, trying to make things smooth. "Of course, their joint object will be to put the Greshamsbury property together again."

"But, my dear sir,"—and then, for twenty minutes, the lawyer went on proving that it would by no means be the same thing; but, nevertheless, Mary Thorne did have her own way.

In the course of the winter Lady De Courcy tried very hard to induce the heiress to visit Courcy Castle, and this request was so backed by Lady Arabella, that the doctor said he thought she might as well go there for three or four days. But here, again, Mary was obstinate. "I don't see it at all," she said. "If you make a point of it, or Frank, or Mr. Gresham, I will go; but I can't see any possible reason." The doctor, when so appealed to, would not absolutely say that he made a point of it, and Mary was tolerably safe as regarded Frank and the squire. If she went, Frank would be expected to go, and Frank disliked Courcy Castle almost more than ever. His aunt was now more than civil to him, and, when they were together, never ceased to compliment him on the desirable way in which he had done his duty by his family.

And soon after Christmas a visitor came to Mary, and stayed a fortnight with her; one whom neither she nor the doctor had expected, and of whom they had not much more than heard. This was the famous Miss Dunstable. "Birds of a feather flock together," said Mrs. Rantaway,—late Miss Gushing,—when she heard of the visit. "The railway man's niece,—if you can call her a niece,—and the quack's daughter will do very well together, no doubt."

"At any rate, they can count their money-bags," said Mrs. Umbleby.

And, in fact, Mary and Miss Dunstable did get on very well together; and Miss Dunstable made herself quite happy at Greshamsbury, although some people, —including Mrs. Rantaway,—contrived to spread a report, that Dr. Thorne, jealous of Mary's money, was going to marry her.

"I shall certainly come and see you turned off," said Miss Dunstable, taking leave of her new friend. Miss Dunstable, it must be acknowledged, was a little too fond of slang; but then, a lady with her fortune, and of her age, may be fond of almost whatever she pleases.

And so by degrees the winter wore away,—very slowly to Frank, as he declared often enough; and slowly, perhaps, to Mary also, though she did not say so. The winter wore away and the chill, bitter, windy, early spring came round. The comic almanacks give us dreadful pictures of January and February; but, in truth, the months which should be made to look gloomy in England are March and April. Let no man boast himself that he has got through the perils of winter till at least the seventh of May.

It was early in April, however, that the great doings were to be done at Greshamsbury. Not exactly on the first. It may be presumed, that in spite of the practical, common-sense spirit of the age, very few people do choose to have themselves united on that day. But some day in the first week of that month was fixed for the ceremony, and from the end of February all through March, Lady Arabella worked and strove in a manner that entitled her to profound admiration.

It was at last settled that the breakfast should be held in the large dining-room at Greshamsbury. There was a difficulty about it which taxed Lady Arabella to the utmost, for, in making the proposition, she could not but seem to be throwing some slight on the house in which the heiress had lived. But when the affair was once opened to Mary, it was astonishing how easy it became.

"Of course," said Mary, "all the rooms in our house would not hold half the people you are talking about, —if they must come."

Lady Arabella looked so beseechingly, nay, so piteously, that Mary had not another word to say. It was evident that they must all come; the De Courcys to the fifth generation; the Duke of Omnium himself, and others in concatenation accordingly.

"But will your uncle be angry if we have the breakfast up here? He has been so very handsome to Frank, that I would n't make him angry for all the world."

"If you don't tell him anything about it, Lady Arabella, he 'll think that it is all done properly. He will never know, if he 's not told, that he ought to give the breakfast and not you."

"Won't he, my dear?" And Lady Arabella looked her admiration for this very talented suggestion. And so that matter was arranged. The doctor never knew, till Mary told him some year or so afterwards, that he had been remiss in any part of his duty.

And who was asked to the wedding? In the first place we have said that the Duke of Omnium was there. This was, in fact, the one circumstance that made this wedding so superior to any other that had

ever taken place in that neighbourhood. The Duke of Omnium never went anywhere; and yet he went to Mary's wedding! And Mary, when the ceremony was over, absolutely found herself kissed by a duke. "Dearest Mary!" exclaimed Lady Arabella, in her ecstasy of joy, when she saw the honour that was done to her daughter-in-law.

"I hope we shall induce you to come to Gatherum Castle soon," said the duke to Frank. "I shall be having a few friends there in the autumn. Let me see; I declare I have not seen you since you were good enough to come to my collection. Ha! ha! ha! It was n't bad fun, was it?" Frank was not very cordial with his answer. He had not quite reconciled himself to the difference of his position. When he was treated as one of the "collection" at Gatherum Castle, he had not married money.

It would be vain to enumerate all the De Courcys that were there. There was the earl, looking very gracious, and talking to the squire about the county. And there was Lord Porlock, looking very ungracious, and not talking to anybody about anything. And there was the countess, who for the last week past had done nothing but pat Frank on the back whenever she could catch him. And there were the Ladies Alexandrina, Margaretta, and Selina, smiling at everybody. And the Honourable George, talking in whispers to Frank about his widow—"Not such a catch as yours, you know; but something extremely snug;—and have it all my own way, too, old fellow, or I shan't come to the scratch." And the Honourable John prepared to toady Frank about his string of hunters; and the Lady

Amelia, by herself, not quite contented with these democratic nuptials—"After all, she is so absolutely nobody; absolutely, absolutely," she said confidentially to Augusta, shaking her head. But before Lady Amelia had left Greshamsbury Augusta was quite at a loss to understand how there could be need for so much conversation between her cousin and Mr. Mortimer Gagebee.

And there were many more De Courcys, whom to enumerate would be much too long.

And the bishop of the diocese, and Mrs. Proudie were there. A hint had even been given, that his lordship would himself condescend to perform the ceremony, if this should be wished; but that work had already been anticipated by a very old friend of the Greshams. Archdeacon Grantly, the rector of Plumstead Episcopi, had long since undertaken this part of the business; and the knot was eventually tied by the joint efforts of himself and Mr. Oriel. Mrs. Grantly came with him, and so did Mrs. Grantly's sister, the new dean's wife. The dean himself was at the time unfortunately absent at Oxford.

And all the Bakers and the Jacksons were there. The last time they had all met together under the squire's roof was on the occasion of Frank's coming of age. The present gala doings were carried on in a very different spirit. That had been a very poor affair, but this was worthy of the best days of Greshamsbury.

Occasion also had been taken of this happy moment to make up, or rather to get rid of the last shreds of the last feud that had so long separated Dr. Thorne

from his own relatives. The Thornes of Ullathorne had made many overtures in a covert way. But our doctor had contrived to reject them. "They would not receive Mary as their cousin," said he, "and I will go nowhere that she cannot go." But now all this was altered. Mrs. Gresham would certainly be received in any house in the county. And thus, Mr. Thorne of Ullathorne, an amiable, popular old bachelor, came to the wedding; and so did his maiden sister, Miss Monica Thorne, than whose no kinder heart glowed through all Barsetshire.

"My dear," said she to Mary, kissing her, and offering her some little tribute, "I am very glad to make your acquaintance; very. It was not her own fault," she added, speaking to herself. "And now that she will be a Gresham, that need not be any longer thought of." Nevertheless, could Miss Thorne have spoken her inward thoughts out loud, she would have declared, that Frank would have done better to have borne his poverty than marry wealth without blood. But then, there are but few so stanch as Miss Thorne; perhaps none in that county,—always excepting Lady Amelia.

And the Oriels were there, of course; the rector and his young wife, and Patience again enacting bridesmaid. It was pretty to see how Beatrice came out as a matron, and gave all manner of matured counsel to her still maiden friend. A month or two of married life does make such a difference!

And Miss Dunstable, also, was a bridesmaid. "Oh, no," said she, when asked; "you should have them young and pretty." But she gave way when she found that Mary did not flatter her by telling her that she was either the one or the other. "The truth is," said

Miss Dunstable, "I have always been a little in love with your Frank, and so I shall do it for his sake." There were but four: the other two were the Gresham twins. Lady Arabella exerted herself greatly in framing hints to induce Mary to ask some of the De Courcy ladies to do her so much honour; but Mary on this head would please herself. "Rank," said she to Beatrice, with a curl on her lip, "has its drawbacks,—and must put up with them."

And now I find that I have not one page,—not half a page,—for the wedding-dress. But what matters? Will it not be all found written in the columns of the Morning Post?

And thus Frank married money, and became a great man. Let us hope that he will be a happy man. As the time of the story has been brought down so near to the present era, it is not practicable for the novelist to tell much of its future career. When I last heard from Barsetshire, it seemed to be quite settled that he is to take the place of one of the old members at the next general election; and they say, also, that there is no chance of any opposition. I have heard, too, that there have been many very private consultations between him and various gentlemen of the county, with reference to the hunt;—and the general feeling is said to be that the hounds should go to Boxall Hill.

At Boxall Hill the young people established themselves on their return from the Continent. And that reminds me that one word must be said of Lady Scatcherd. "You will always stay there with us," said Mary to her, caressing her ladyship's rough hand, and looking kindly into that kind face.

But Lady Scatcherd would not consent to this. "I

will come and see you sometimes, and then I shall enjoy myself. Yes, I will come and see you, and my own dear boy." The affair was ended by her taking Mrs. Opie Green's cottage, in order that she might be near the doctor; Mrs. Opie Green having married—somebody.

And of whom else must we say a word? Patience, also, of course, got a husband,—or will do so. Dear Patience! it would be a thousand pities that so good a wife should be lost to the world. Whether Miss Dunstable will ever be married, or Augusta Gresham, or Mr. Moffat, or any of the tribe of the De Courcys,—except Lady Amelia,—I cannot say. They have all of them still their future before them. That Bridget was married to Thomas,—that I am able to assert; for I know that Janet was much put out by their joint desertion.

Lady Arabella has not yet lost her admiration for Mary, and Mary, in return, behaves admirably. Another event is expected, and her ladyship is almost as anxious about that as she was about the wedding. "A matter, you know, of such importance in the county!" she whispered to Lady De Courcy.

Nothing can be more happy than the intercourse between the squire and his son. What their exact arrangements are, we need not specially inquire; but the demon of pecuniary embarrassment has lifted his black wings from the demesne of Greshamsbury.

And now we have but one word left for the doctor. "If you don't come and dine with me," said the squire to him, when they found themselves both deserted, "mind; I shall come and dine with you." And on this principle they seem to act. Dr. Thorne continues

to extend his practice, to the great disgust of Dr. Fillgrave; and when Mary suggested to him that he should retire, he always boxed her ears. He knows the way, however, to Boxall Hill as well as ever he did, and is willing to acknowledge, that the tea there is almost as good as it ever was at Greshamsbury.

THE END.

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